

PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION EXPERIENCED BY  
PARTICIPANTS OF MODERN WILDERNESS RITES OF PASSAGE QUESTS:  
AN INTUITIVE INQUIRY

by

Robert Wood

A dissertation submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Psychology

Institute of Transpersonal Psychology

Palo Alto, California

March 7, 2010

I certify that I have read and approved the content and presentation of this dissertation:

---

Nancy Rowe, Ph.D., Committee Chairperson

---

Date

---

Charles Fisher, Ph.D., Committee Member

---

Date

---

John Davis, Ph.D., Committee Member

---

Date

UMI Number: 3397618

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI 3397618

Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This edition of the work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Copyright

©

Robert Wood

2010

All Rights Reserved

**Abstract**

**Psycho-Spiritual Transformation Experienced by**

**Participants of Modern Wilderness Rites of Passage Quests:**

**An Intuitive Inquiry**

**by**

**Robert Wood**

This study investigates and reports the quest experiences of modern wilderness rites of passage questers that prompted psycho-spiritual transformation, the nature of those psycho-spiritual transformations, and the context of questers' lives when called to quest. Intuitive Inquiry provided the method for the research that relied on the researcher's intuitive impressions of interviews with 12 questers who believed they experienced psycho-spiritual transformation as the result of a quest. The researcher identified 12 lenses through which he viewed the subject matter before engaging in the interviews. These lenses were strengthened, expanded, and changed and 3 new lenses emerged when the researcher analyzed the interview data, including his intuitive impressions of the interviews, using thematic content analysis. These final lenses included the concepts that (a) in Nature, all is interconnected and modern humans long for and find comfort in this connection; (b) humans possess potential to transform beyond their imaginings and are driven by powerful evolutionary or spiritual forces to do so; (c) the context of the events in questers' lives that precipitates their answering the call to quest influences any psycho-spiritual transformation that occurs as a consequence; (d) greater self-awareness can be achieved through archetypal encounters in Nature, through ritual, and through reflecting unconscious material onto Nature; and (e) integration of such greater self-awareness can promote psycho-spiritual transformation. The findings presented are that a modern wilderness rites of

passage quest serves as an accelerant to the psycho-spiritual transformational process of questers who earnestly undertake their own, likely unconscious, version of the archetypal, yearning-discovery-integration, hero's journey. Such transformation processes involve the integration of newly discovered aspects of themselves revealed as a result of connecting with Nature during the quest. Guides can utilize these findings to encourage questers to examine the longing in their lives for clues as to their unconsciously desired psycho-spiritual transformation.

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to all heroes and heroines  
who quest to find themselves in Nature's wilderness.

## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Dr. Nancy Rowe, the chairperson of my dissertation committee, for the patient assistance she has provided me throughout the dissertation process. She has generously shared with me her connection with Nature and her understanding of academic rigor. Dr. Charles Fisher and Dr. John Davis, members of my dissertation committee, have graciously shared with me their insights and have consistently provided me with encouragement and inspiration. I thank them.

I am also grateful to Dr. William Braud who, as my advisor, inspired me to pursue the passion within me that resulted in this project. Dr. Rosemary Anderson provided support and guidance in my application of Intuitive Inquiry as the research method for my dissertation, for which I express my gratitude. All of the faculty and my fellow classmates, throughout the several years of my studies at ITP and Naropa, have influenced this work and I appreciate them all for that influence.

My editor, Dr. Karen Funk, displayed extraordinary skill in discovering my numerous attempts to misspell words, to violate APA writing style, and otherwise to distort written language. I thank her for her cheerful, patient, and speedy work.

I had the extreme good fortune to meet and interview 12 wonderful people for this study, all of whom openly and willingly shared with me some very sacred moments they had experienced in their lives. I was given the opportunity to glimpse the greatness of these individuals. I am humbled and awed by what I witnessed. To these people and for these privileges I am thankful.

Most importantly, I express my loving gratitude to my wife, Nora, who recently completed her own dissertation, for the support and understanding of a fellow traveler. Once again, she has lovingly and patiently endured the terrifying beauty of another of my psycho-spiritual journeys: this one launched by work on this dissertation.

## Preface: Beauty of Terrifying Shapes

### The Soul Lives Contented

The soul lives contented by listening,  
if it wants to change  
into the beauty of terrifying shapes,  
it tries to speak.

That's why you will not sing,  
afraid as you are  
of who might join  
with you.

The voice hesitant,  
and her hand trembling in the dark for yours.  
She touches your face  
and says your name in the same instant.

The one you refused to say,  
over and over,  
the one you refused to say (Whyte, 1992, p. 31).

At the age of 28 I co-found an alternative energy company that uses renewable resources—such as hydro, wind, and cogeneration—to produce electricity. The company is successful, and it launches an initial public offering (IPO) 6 years later. Five years after the IPO, a public utility acquires a large block of the company's stock with plans to take over the company. It makes promises to the other stockholders who acquiesce in the take-over; however, when its nuclear power plant has to be shut down, it defaults on its promises to those shareholders. To cover the fact of its failure, the public utility attempts to divert blame to the founders of my company, my partners, and me. One of my business partners, a liberal Democrat, is serving as the first female mayor of conservative, patriarchal Salt Lake City. The local political powers, frustrated by my partner's popularity and effectiveness as mayor, jump on the accusation of the public utility against the founders of our company and deploy their sympathizers in the news media and local, state, and federal governments to destroy the mayor, along with the rest of us.

For five years, at the expense of millions of dollars, the mayor, my other partners, and I fight the relentless legal pressures of these political enemies and the forces of the government they conscript to their ruthless cause. In the end, on the verge of financial ruin, I put the welfare of my family above my need for justice. I find something to which I can plead guilty to satisfy the hungry beast that had been unleashed on us and to end the battle I will lose even if I prevail in court. I plead guilty to allowing the attorneys for the company to alter my description of a transaction from a “fee” to an “option” in a draft of the offering memorandum for the company’s IPO. The document that provided for the fee bears the label of “option” and the attorneys advised that the document label would be a more accurate descriptor than the word “fee.” The offering memorandum accurately detailed the amount of the payment, the payees, the payer, the purpose, and all other aspects of the transaction. While I am certain no one was misled by the use of one word versus the other, I did, in fact, follow the attorneys’ advice and allowed the word to be changed. So I plead to this “crime.”

Federal District Judge Dee Benson is forced to mete out the punishment for this injustice, and, apparently not content with it; he says, in sentencing me:

I don’t generally start off a sentence with a compliment, Mr. Wood, but I will in your case. Your attitude and demeanor and cooperation . . . [have] been remarkable and quite admirable. . . . [Your company] in terms of its near collapse and its problems both civilly and criminally has been overstated in the press. . . . I certainly don’t put you in the [criminal] category. . . . [But] . . . you’re in that unfortunate situation of being the person who goes to jail because the public good needs to be satisfied. (U.S. District Court, 1996, pp. 18-22)

He sentences me to a year and a day, which provides further evidence of his displeasure with the prosecutors and the injustice of the case. One year is the minimum sentence to which he can sentence me under the federal minimum sentencing guidelines. If sentenced to a year, I would have to serve a year; however, any sentence over a year is eligible for a “good time” deduction.

In other words, the effect of increasing the minimum sentence by one day is to reduce the actual time I will have to serve by several weeks. Moreover, in an unprecedented and unexpected action, Judge Benson, after I serve a little more than half of my sentence, orders Nellis FPC to move me to a halfway house, near my home in Salt Lake City.

So deeply do I slumber in the captivity of my daily existence that a screaming wake-up call of such unjust decibels is required to awaken me. I wonder at the power of my soul to bring into my reality events of a magnitude so enormous. I am very grateful for the compassionate amelioration of the situation; although he is caught in the cogs of the machine set in motion by mal-intended politicians, Judge Benson uses his power to lessen the blow they deal me. I also wonder, without self-incrimination, at the gentleness of previous messages from my soul that I miss. Only when those first symbolic imprisonments escape my understanding does my soul augment the severity of the symbols until, in desperation, it changes into a beautiful terrifying shape I eventually come to understand.

Even with the clamoring of the alarm clock of impending actual imprisonment, I do not immediately awaken; further rattling is required. I was born into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, as was almost all of the population of the small town in which I grew up. In addition to serving a mission, I was active in the lay ministry of the church. At the time my soul attempts to awaken me, I am serving on the High Council of my local area. However, when the local newspapers begin their campaign of destruction against my partners and me, the church—instead of offering refuge to my wife, my six children, and me—decides to hold a court of excommunication. The church court finds that I have committed no moral or legal crimes, publishes its findings, and recommends no punishment; nevertheless, a much harsher judgment is

reflected in the opinions of our fellow church members. My family and I endure the ostracism of church members, neighbors, and many of our “friends.”

The beauty of these terrifying shapes lies in how they illustrate the dimensions of the prisons I create for my freedom-loving soul. I lived the American dream; I grew up as a religious boy on a farm, and, through education, hard work, and good fortune, I cofounded a company, grew it, and became economically successful. Now malevolent politicians use the awesome powers of the same America that enabled my dream to destroy it. Furthermore, the religious organization of my youth and young adulthood, to which I have given years of service, delights in the downfall of one of their own, rather than providing support and comfort. I wonder what else I hold onto as foundational that possesses no more substance than these shadows on the walls of the cave.

When I question the stability of the foundations of country and religion upon which I construct my life and the prison for my soul, I lapse into depression and recurring nightmares of imprisonment. At one point, I seek the help of a psychologist who diagnoses me with PTSD. The diagnosis horrifies me. At the time, I know little of psychology and I think that the label means I suffer from a disease. I feel that I possess insufficient fortitude to weather the challenges of my life and have blow them so out of proportion that I cause myself to become psychologically damaged.

One day, in the midst of the legal battles swirling in our lives, my ever-loyal wife returns from a massage appointment carrying an Animus Valley Institute brochure for what it called a “vision quest.” Sitting at our kitchen counter, I thumb the brochure as we talk. The brochure provides a description of a vision quest: several days in the wilderness, three of which are spent alone and fasting, seeking a life purpose and a gift to bring back to the world. I experience a flood of memories of moments I have felt connected in the wilderness: I recall that I have spent hours alone in the fields of our farm, have fished in the mountains near my home, have spent many days

and nights camping and hiking in the wilderness, and have often driven deep into the vast wilderness that surrounds my home to pray. My soul speaks; it whispers that I should do the vision quest described in the brochure. Because the message has at that point “changed into the beauty of terrifying shapes” I am finally ready to hear it. I hear my soul. I look up from the brochure into the blue Scottish eyes of the person I have loved since we were high school sweethearts and say, “I have to do this.”

Never before or since in my life have I been so certain that I must do something as I am in that instant when I decide to go on the vision quest. In the midst of the chaos my soul has created in that life, I experience unprecedented clarity and an otherworldly sense of purpose. Many times before and during my wilderness rites of passage quest, I wonder whether I am doing the right thing, but I remember the clarity I had in that moment when I had decided to do it, and I persevere.

I travel to Durango, Colorado in September of 1994 to meet at the designated place to begin our wilderness rites of passage quest. I arrive a day early, walk around the town, and spend a restless night in a hotel near the meeting place. Many times I think of just returning to my home and forgetting the whole crazy idea, but the clarity of my call pushes me on. When our group gathers, I think they represent a very strange collection. The ceremonies, which seem very pagan and even sacrilegious, leave me ill at ease. At times I feel so uncomfortable that I choose not to participate. I imagine God would be mad at me for participating. Even when we perform a sweat lodge ceremony, my only goal is survival; although I succeed in attaining that goal, I essentially miss the opportunity for insight that the sacred ceremony might provide. In retrospect I see that, so ensconced in my prison am I, that, even when the barred door swings open, I cower in the corner.

After 3 days in Durango, we travel to Canyonlands National Park. Because of my affinity with the outdoors, I immediately begin to feel more relaxed and comfortable when we begin the

challenging hike down into the canyon. We spend about 3 days performing more ceremony and finding our “power spots.” Although I feel more relaxed generally, I only reluctantly and minimally participate in the sacred dance ceremony. Other ceremonies, such as the fire ceremony wherein one places some symbol of what one wants to leave behind one in the fire, makes more sense to me. I burn a copy of my company’s IPO memorandum.

The night before those of us performing our wilderness rites of passage are to leave the group and walk to our separate power spots where we will spend 3 days and 3 nights alone, we gather to talk of our fears. Many of the others express fears of the scorpions, bears, snakes, and other creatures. I do not share their fears; I have spent many nights camping (although never alone) in the wilderness. However, my soul quickly corrects that arrogance: during the 1st night of the solo, a black bear walks through my camp a few feet from where I rest under my tarp. My heart pounds so loudly I think I can hear it echoing off the canyon walls. The bear pays no attention to me whatsoever and continues down the slope. She has accomplished my soul’s purpose: I am now terrified. Again, upon reflection, it is clear to me that the bear is not the real cause of my fear; something significant is about to change. I can feel it, and I fear it.

When I have been participating in my rites of passage quest in the wilderness for about a week, the last 3 days of it spent fasting, completely alone and terrified that Bear would return, I dream of imprisonment, engage in a conversation with a tree firmly rooted in a cliff, and see faces of historical freedom fighters in the rocks. Because I am alone in outer wild nature, my soul, my inner wild nature, feels at home and very alive (Abram, 1996, p. 16-21). Because fasting and fear have quieted the din of my ego-chatter, I hear my soul. A few days later I record the following words that relate my felt experience of the final night of the 3-day solo portion of my wilderness rites of passage quest:

*In the desert, on the shelf of a rock cliff deep in a canyon of Canyonlands in Southeastern Utah on a cool, crystal clear autumn night, I sit in my power circle. I am well into my 4th day of fasting, seeking a gift to bring back to my people. I sit as still as I can. A slight wind rustles the scarce vegetation. Against the backdrop of a hundred-foot high red cliff marbled with granite, a great, weather-battered piñon pine tree, my guide for this part of my journey, and I gaze across the canyon. The night has crept into the canyon several hours before, stretching the shadows until they have melded into darkness. My eyes gradually acclimate to the darkness; the sky is clear, and the now familiar lights that have traveled for many rotations of the Earth parade across the sky in witness of yet one more rotation. For 3 days and now a 3rd night, I have meditated here, searching for answers among the rocks across the canyon. I have seen the faces of the Buddha, Churchill, Mohammed, Abraham Lincoln, Karl Marx, and Martin Luther King. Because of my Mormon upbringing, I have sought the face of Christ.*

*In this spot, I have listened for hours to the old piñon pine tree. Before setting out to find my power place, I had dreamed of it: a sheer rock cliff, with a lone pine tree. When I had encountered this spot after searching for hours in the canyons, I had known it was the power place of my dream. The tree has obviously suffered years of abuse by very harsh weather. It is bent, all alone and abandoned; no other trees are around to buffer the blasting winds. It wears several broken branches and has driven its roots into what appears to be solid rock. It tells me that it has learned from the adversity, is a tougher and wiser tree for the experiences. I reflect on my own adversities. I seem to be reeling still from the blows. I sometimes feel as though I am living someone else's life. Maybe I have been, and that is why my soul has brought me here. As I sit in my spot, I feel the value of this tree's lessons but I cannot rationalize it. (As it later turns out, the tree's lessons are of enormous literal value to me: I become stronger, my relationship*

with my wife strengthens, and my family becomes stronger because we are buffeted by a great storm of life. We lean into it, hold onto each other, and emerge strengthened.)

*I try to think of none of the adversity as I sit in the power circle. I try to keep my mind clear. Everything seems amazingly clear after 4 days of fasting. It had taken most of the 4 days to quiet my ego. The constant conversation usually going on in my head has finally stopped, and I just listen. What gift can I take home to my people?*

*How is it that a religious Mormon has ventured so far from his normal mode of seeking inspiration? Mormons are taught that fasting and prayer is an acceptable, even a recommended, method of obtaining inspiration. In that regard, I am not very far afield. However, very few Mormons would create a power circle by opening sacred space and honoring each of the four directions with a blessed rock. I am not yet free of my religious chains, and I worry that God will not be happy with me for dabbling in these pagan rituals.*

*I finally find the face of Christ in the marbled rock of the cliff behind me, not in front of me where I have been seeking it. Surely, there is a message of value in the fact that I have been sitting with my back to the cliff by a great lone pine tree seeking something that was all the time just a few feet behind and above me. Finding that face smiling benevolently at me amid the other faces provides some relief and comfort to me. Maybe God is not as unhappy with me as I had begun to think. But why is His face behind when all of the other faces are in front of me?*

*I feel now, more than think, as I sit in my power circle. I don't have thoughts racing through my mind; it is very quiet in my mind. Deep inside my body, perhaps in my heart, I sense. I sense an overwhelming love. I feel both loved and loving. Love, given and received, accompanies images of my wife. This deep, resounding sense of love accompanies images of my children, of my extended family, of my business associates, of my friends, of everyone I know, of*

*everyone, of everything. Then in my mind comes the query, “What gift can I take back to my people?”*

*The birds in the canyons know the sun is coming before I see any evidence of it. They spread the word that their friends to the east have spotted a great ball of fire that is heading this way. Have they forgotten that the same thing occurred yesterday and the day before that? Why is my mind wandering again? My ego keeps working; it is so weak and so tired.*

*Tonight has provided me with one of the most spiritual experiences of my life; but I am also supposed to get a gift to bring back to my people. If I have received it, I don’t know that I have received it—if I haven’t received it, I am running out of time. I need to meet up with Ben, my solo “buddy,” at dawn and join at base camp with the others all returning from their 3-day solos. Quiet, mind! Concentrate, but don’t think; hold the query: “What gift can I take back to my people?”*

*The pre-dawn light of the rising sun amplifies the contrast of the green trees against the red rocks as I peer down the canyon from my place in my power circle. Either I am not going to get a message to take back to my people or it has already come and I have missed it completely. I have had lots of good experiences on my wilderness rites of passage quest. After all, I encountered Bear and she has let me live to tell of it. Just because the culminating event of receiving a message did not happen, that cannot mean that I have failed in my quest. I am so exhausted and weak. I start to think about the work involved in dismantling my tarp, rolling up my sleeping bag, stuffing them all in my backpack, putting on my hiking boots, and humping down the canyon and along the 3 miles back to base camp. Okay, time to get going; no message is coming.*

*The sun clears the top of the canyon, which has a thousand different faces during the course of a day as the sun plays with the shadows. I have seen this face of dawn for 4 mornings now. I think, “This place is a part of me and I am a part of it, we are linked forever.” I am not concerned about getting a message for my people now; maybe the face of Christ is my message. I certainly have learned how much Nora, my wife, means to me, how much I love her, and how much she has given me. My work, religious duties, and impatience have impeded my attentions to her. I commit to demonstrating to her how much I love her.*

*I look around my power circle with genuine gratitude. The night has taught me its lessons. I begin to rise. The cold of the night has made my joints very stiff; I have been kneeling for nearly 8 hours. The pain associated with fasting has ceased at some time during the 2nd day, but I feel light-headed and very weak. The world appears very sharp and clear. The air is perfectly still; I can hear lizards skittering across the rocks on the cliff behind me. Then I hear: “Set your people free” (Wood, 2004, pp. 11-15).*

At times tears flow when I think of the extraordinary effort my soul undertakes to convey this message of freedom to me. First, it speaks in symbols, which is the language souls use in dreams, active imagination, and altered states of consciousness to communicate to consciousness. The piñon pine, Great Tree, which gives me its name for a time as my Earth name, is certainly free and strong in its world; the faces I see in the rocks are those of great men who have fought for the freedom of others; a wild and free (and my favorite) quote of Jesus, whose face is in the cliff behind me, is, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). I fail to recognize the message in these symbols. I can just imagine the frustration of my soul as I sit in my power circle wondering what message I am to take back to

my people. Finally, it has to pull out a sledgehammer and resort to English language, “Set your people free.”

As I understand this message, its implementation requires major changes in my life, the lives of my family, and the lives of those whom I originally defined as “my people.” I make major changes in my life: together with my wife, I leave the Mormon Church and give my children the freedom to do so (they all leave); I move to Eugene, Oregon; and I change my occupation to become a college professor. Some changes are freeing for my people and me, such as leaving the Mormon faith; others end up as just thrashing about. I return to Salt Lake City. I need to be free in my place; Utah is my place and it is my wife’s place. I love teaching and interacting with searching human beings; however, I do not love my subjects of economics and corporate finance (or at least I do not love the way I am required to teach them). Hence, I return to my financial consulting business and am seeking a degree in transpersonal psychology so that I can return to teaching and love what I am teaching.

The message I receive during my wilderness rites of passage quest continues profoundly to shift the way I am in the world: my soul whispering there just beneath the surface, reminding me, as Mary Oliver (1992) does, “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life” (p. 94). I passionately seek an understanding about the source of that soulful resonation. So far, my search has included years of studying shamanism, Buddhism, and transpersonal psychology. I search for the mystical “other” that spoke to me and told me to set my people free. I reenact other wilderness rites of passage, train to become a wilderness rites of passage guide, and guide others on their wilderness rites of passage journeys. Finally, I conduct this Intuitive Inquiry study. While the study involves 12 participants who generously share their time, experiences, and hearts with me, in the end, this study is about my own self-discovery.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Preface: Beauty of Terrifying Shapes.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xxiv
List of Figures.....	xxv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Introduction to the Study .....	1
Research Questions.....	3
Purpose and Objective of the Study.....	3
Implications of the Study .....	6
Definitions.....	8
Overview of the Chapters of the Study.....	9
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	11
A Modern Wilderness Rites of Passage Quest .....	11
Theoretical Ground: Potentially Transformational Encounters.....	16
Sources of Transformational Encounters on a Wilderness Rites of Passage Quest .....	19
Dreams as Transformational Encounters.....	20
Active Imagination as Transformational Encounters .....	21
Altered States of Consciousness as Transformational Encounters.....	25
Mystical Source of Transformational Encounters .....	27
Potential Transformational Encounters on a Wilderness Rites of Passage Quest .....	29

The Hero's Journey .....	29
The Calling.....	30
Nature as “Supernatural Wonder” and “Fabulous Force” .....	31
Trials .....	33
Death and Rebirth .....	35
New Name .....	36
Gifts or Visions .....	37
Shadow Aspects of Wilderness Rites of Passage .....	39
Psycho-Spiritual Transformation .....	42
Summary .....	49
Chapter 3: Methods.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Research Questions.....	51
Rationale for Selection of Intuitive Inquiry Method.....	59
Intuitive Explorations.....	61
Doing Dream Work.....	62
Shamanic Journeying.....	63
Taking Questions to Nature .....	63
Working in Sacred Space.....	64
Being Alert for Synchronicities .....	66
Using Creative Expression to Connect With Unconscious Material .....	66
Research Design.....	67
Cycle 1: Clarifying and Engaging the Research Topic.....	67

Cycle 2: Identifying the Researcher’s Preliminary Lenses .....	70
Cycle 3: Data Collecting and Summary Reports. ....	83
Cycle 4: Transforming and Refining Lenses .....	95
Cycle 5: Integration of Findings With Literature Review .....	96
Summary .....	97
Chapter 4: Summary of Participants’ Interviews.....	99
Introduction.....	99
Participants.....	99
Summary of Interviews With Participants.....	102
Ancient Tree.....	102
Intuitive Impressions of Ancient Tree’s Story.....	105
Climber .....	106
Intuitive Impressions of Climber’s Story.....	108
Dreamer.....	110
Intuitive Impressions of Dreamer’s Story.....	112
Earth Child .....	113
Intuitive Impressions of Earth Child’s Story .....	115
He Bear .....	117
Intuitive Impressions of He Bear’s Story.....	119
Lioness .....	120
Intuitive Impressions of Lioness’s Story .....	122
She Bear .....	123
Intuitive Impressions of She Bear’s Story .....	124

Soul Dancer.....	126
Intuitive Impressions of Soul Dancer’s Story .....	130
Spearman.....	131
Intuitive Impressions of Spearman’s Story .....	132
Spider Woman .....	133
Intuitive Impressions of Spider Woman’s Story .....	135
Stillwater .....	136
Intuitive Impressions of Stillwater’s Story .....	138
Thinker .....	139
Intuitive Impressions of Thinker’s Story .....	140
Re-searcher .....	143
Intuitive Impressions of Re-searcher’s Story .....	144
Thematic Content Analysis of Group Themes.....	144
Call to Change.....	145
Movement Toward Integration .....	146
Summary of Themes of Participants’ Experiences During Wilderness Rites of Passage	
Quests.....	147
Connected With Nature.....	147
Shift in Awareness .....	148
Self-Acceptance .....	149
Nature as a Teacher.....	150
Summary of Themes of Participants’ Transformations .....	151
Authentic Self .....	151

Sense of Serenity and Peace .....	152
Sense of Purpose .....	152
Chapter 5: Transforming and Refining the Lenses .....	154
Preliminary Lenses.....	154
Process of Transforming and Refining Preliminary Lenses .....	157
Refined and Transformed Lenses .....	160
Strengthened Lenses .....	160
Expanded Lenses .....	164
Changed Lenses .....	171
New Lenses .....	173
Synthesis of Questers' Contexts, Experiences, and Transformations.....	180
Chapter 6: Findings, Cycle 5, and Conclusion .....	184
Findings .....	184
Cycle 5: Integration of Findings and Literature Review .....	187
Context of Questers' Lives and Call to Change.....	190
Threshold Through Exposure to Wilderness .....	191
Threshold Through Ritual.....	194
Reincorporation by Integration of Previously Unrecognized Aspects of Self....	196
Unique Insights of the Study.....	200
Conclusion .....	202
What Were Some Weaknesses of This Study? .....	204
What Was Valuable About the Study? .....	206
Practical Applications .....	208

What Remains Undisclosed: Areas for Future Study .....	210
References.....	213
Appendix A: Letter of Invitation .....	222
Appendix B: Informed Consent.....	223
Appendix C: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement .....	226
Appendix D: Demographics and Personal Information Questionnaire .....	227
Appendix E: Instructions and Interview Preview Questionnaire.....	228
Appendix F: Interview Protocol .....	230
Appendix G: Some Modern Wilderness Rites of Passage Providers .....	234
Appendix H: Integral Research Skills .....	237
Appendix I: Cycle 1 Dialogue With the Coyote.....	243
Appendix J: Preliminary Lenses .....	249
Appendix K: Interview With Climber .....	252

## List of Tables

Tables		Page
1	Preliminary Lenses.....	73
2	Preliminary Lenses.....	155
3	Refined and Transformed Lenses.....	158

## List of Figures

Figures		Page
1	Climber's drawing.....	107
2	He Bear's fear.....	118
3	She Bear's journal page.....	125
4	Soul Dancer's vision board.....	129

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### *Introduction to the Study*

My interest in modern wilderness rites of passage began 14 years ago when I participated in a wilderness rites of passage quest in the canyon lands of southeastern Utah. I heard the calling to conduct my wilderness rites of passage quest after receiving a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I feel most at home in the world when I am in the mountains and deserts of Utah, a state that offers extraordinarily spectacular and awe-inspiring vistas of infinite possibilities and, conversely, contains a society in which I felt repressed. While growing up, I was surrounded by a vast, open, and seemingly endless panorama in Utah, but I never felt free in the world. While I was in the midst of this inner-outer paradox, my soul cried out for me to recognize that I was not free. Three times in my life, experiences of confinement arose in an attempt to bring my lack of inner freedom to my attention. Each experience was an actual confinement and a symbolic imprisonment that felt more restrictive than the previous, until the last, by far the most traumatic, produced the symptoms diagnosed as PTSD but was, in fact, my calling to seek a wilderness rites of passage quest.

The first symbolic imprisonment presented itself when, because of the Vietnam-era draft, I volunteered as soon as I graduated from high school to be a National Guard trainee at Ford Ord in Monterey, California. I trained with regular army draftees for approximately 6 months in army basic and advanced individual training and then served for 6 more years, 1 weekend per month and 2 weeks per summer, in the Utah National Guard. The second time I felt the symbolic bonds of imprisonment occurred was when, at the age of 19, I volunteered to serve in a proselytizing mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints for 2 years in Brazil. During both of these events, I desperately missed the companionship of my high school sweetheart, who was also

my closest friend and later became my wife. These separations gave me an intense experience of loneliness and the loss of sustaining affection; the mere recollection causes my heart to groan. The confinement and separation seemed claustrophobic to me.

The third experience that raised my awareness of my inner lack of freedom was a real imprisonment. Just after my 40th birthday, I was sentenced to serve 1 year in a federal prison and was incarcerated at Nellis Federal Prison Camp (FPC) for just over 6 months. This was an unjust imprisonment, and the pain of the loneliness now expanded to include not only my sweetheart who was by this time my wife of 20 years but also my six children. The literal imprisonment resulted in the PTSD that eventually opened my understanding of the feeling of imprisonment that confined my soul in a vivid and brutal way.

When I look at this period of my life through the lenses of transpersonal psychology, I see that my own soul brought to me these increasingly traumatic experiences of confinement that ultimately manifested as an actual imprisonment. Only when the trauma leading up to that event resulted in PTSD did I finally listen to my soul's prompting and seek freedom by answering the call of a wilderness rites of passage quest. My soul knew I was a restless captive of my restricted worldview and that I would languish there if something did not happen; so, as a good soul, it caused something terrible to happen. Whyte (1992) expressed this thought in the opening lines of a poem:

The soul lives contented  
by listening,  
if it wants to change  
into the beauty of  
terrifying shapes  
it tries to speak. (p. 31)

At the times of the imprisonments, both the symbolic and the actual, the terrifying shapes into which my soul changed caused me a great deal of suffering. I see now the beauty of the method my soul used to get my attention and drag me out of the comfort of my habituated life.

### *Research Questions*

This study explores the lived experiences of individuals who participated in modern wilderness rites of passage, experienced encounters during those rites that invited major transformations in their lives, and attempted to integrate those encounters into their lives. It asks, What is the nature of the lived experience of individuals who believe that they experienced an encounter on a modern wilderness rites of passage quest that has propelled them into psycho-spiritual transformation? What was the nature of the lived experience for the individual? What was going on in the individual's life at the time, and, over time, how did the experience propel the individual toward psycho-spiritual transformation in her or his life?

### *Purpose and Objective of the Study*

A primary purpose of this study is to integrate further my own experience of a wilderness rites of passage quest. I wish to *re-search* it in the manner described by Romanynshyn (2007) in *The Wounded Researcher: Research With Soul in Mind*. I used the Intuitive Inquiry research method for this research precisely because of its requirements that I, as the researcher, explore my connection to the research topic, identify the lenses through which I view the topic, gather data on the lived experience of others in similar circumstance, process the data in a soulful manner, and integrate the found material by re-searching in a return arc what I thought I knew about the topic (Anderson, 2000, 2006, 2008). It is my belief that this process has encouraged the integration I have yet to accomplish completely. The outer wilderness I witnessed on my wilderness rites of passage quest stirred the inner wildness within me. As I began this dissertation process, I noticed

within myself a reluctance to expose completely my wild nature. I chose a dissertation chairperson and a methodology that require such exposure. I have acknowledged the message of my wilderness rites of passage quest through some major transitions in my life. Nevertheless, this study has helped me recognize that I have yet to “set free” some part of me that wants to live my “one wild and precious life” (Oliver, 1992, p. 94).

In my first draft of the proposal for this dissertation, the wild part of me was safely ensconced in the familiar shadows of academics. I have retreated to the confines of the cave of academia many times during my life: I have degrees in economics, law, business administration, and transpersonal psychology that, to date, have required 11 years of post-graduate study. A couple of those years were spent immersed in econometric statistical analysis. I am comfortable with dispassionate academic analysis. I could, without roiling the deep waters of my soul, engage a quantitative dissertation project. Growth and freedom rarely occur in comfort.

With this Intuitive Inquiry study, I feel as though I have stepped, or leapt, off a cliff, as would the archetypal Fool. I have left the familiar ground of the impartial research with advisors steeped in statistical analysis and jumped into the unknown of the intimately involved research of Intuitive Inquiry with a chairperson who beautifully embodies the wildness of Nature. (The word *Nature* is intentionally capitalized throughout this dissertation in instances in which it refers to the larger concept of Nature identified in the study’s definitions.) This leap engendered the same fear as would the beginning of a wilderness rites of passage journey itself: a hero leaving the comfort and safety of his known world to cross the threshold in the wilderness with the hope of returning with something of value for his people. My soul continues to drag me out of my comfortable habituated life. I sense that stepping into the unknown involves unrestrained and wild sharing of my message of freedom and of myself. It also involves bearing sacred witness to the lived

experiences of others who had encounters during a modern wilderness rites of passage quest that caused major transformation in their lives. I believe that engaging in this intuitive study, an archetypal Fool's/Hero's rites of passage itself, has furthered my integration of the message received in my prior wilderness rites of passage quest.

Beyond my personal need to fulfill my own purpose of exploration of and continued integration of the lessons of my own wilderness rites of passage experience, there are additional reasons to undertake this study. Many have written of their own or others' wilderness rites of passage experiences and have recounted transformational encounters. For example, Foster and Little (1989, 1992, 1998) have written extensively about the experiences of the participants of modern wilderness rites of passage provided by the School of the Lost Borders. Likewise, Plotkin (2003) provided several examples of the experiences of Animas Valley Institute questers. Brensinger (2002) wrote of her experiences with the shadow, inner and outer, during her own wilderness rites of passage quest, and Clements (1992) wrote an excellent quantitative dissertation on the wilderness rites of passage quest as a transformative spiritual experience. Atchinson (1998) wrote a moving heuristic dissertation about restorative solitude that reports experiences of spiritual healing and transformation encountered in purposeful solitude. This study fills a gap in the existing research because no prior study has examined the qualitative, subjective experience of an encounter during a modern wilderness rites of passage quest that required a major life transformation and the integration of that encounter.

Wilderness rites of passage have existed for tens of thousands of years because they allow human questers to tap into some source of encounters that provides meaning and context to human existence. By honoring the soul's need for purpose and the human's need for meaning, the modern quester taps into that same source that the indigenous people sought. The indigenous people had

their ways, such as vision quests, and we modern people have our ways, such as wilderness rites of passage. Both seek the same sort of meaningful event. This study endeavors to discover the answer to questions about the meaningful event of the lived experiences of individuals who have participated in modern wilderness rites of passage, experienced encounters during those rites that required major transformations in their lives, and attempted to integrate those encounters into their lives. Intuitive Inquiry, with its explorations of ways of knowing beyond the didactical, taps into the same sources of information that are reported by questers as having been encountered during a wilderness rites of passage quest. For this principal reason, it provides an excellent method for understanding psycho-spiritual transformations encountered during a wilderness rites of passage experience.

### *Implications of the Study*

A study of the transformational encounters experienced during a modern wilderness rites of passage quest may further transpersonal psychology by providing a practical tool for healing the so-called psychopathologies of modern psychology. Hillman (1975) encouraged the study of archetypal psychology because he believed that the integration of archetypal encounters such as experiencing transformational encounters during a wilderness rites of passage quest provides growth opportunities for those experiencing callings that are often mislabeled by modern psychologists as psychopathologies. He and others believe that many experiences labeled as psychopathologies may, in fact, not be pathological; rather, they may be callings of spiritual emergency (Watson, 1994) or opportunities for developmental progress. They may signal that something is missing from the lives of the sufferers; the “illnesses” may be the souls’ attempts to alert the afflicted that they are off the path of fulfilling their life purpose. An encounter with the symbolic, archetypal elements that are potentially available during a modern wilderness rites of

passage quest may lead to transformation, emergence, developmental progression, and healing. If modern wilderness rites of passage comprise a method through which humans may encounter such transformational experiences, the psychological healing capacities represented by this tool may further advance the field.

The study of modern wilderness rites of passage also advances transpersonal psychology by exploring whether the encounters experienced during such a quest are recognized as transformational and assimilated by the participants as numinous or spiritually significant events. If this study supports the expectations that the participants of modern wilderness rites of passage quests do integrate the experiences encountered there, then the transpersonal psychologist, the spiritual guide, or the workshop leader has another tool in his (this dissertation alternates throughout between feminine and masculine in its use of gender pronouns) toolbox of methods for transforming and increasing meaning in the lives of those who seek his advice. If modern wilderness rites of passage encounters promote transformation and enhance meaning, and if the source of such insights is believed to be the material of the collective unconscious, the experience may promote a sense of belonging to a continuous human experience. Contacts during wilderness rites of passage experiences with the other-than-human beings at work in the world also have the potential to aid the participant in his or her search for meaning. Modern rites of passage, by providing transformational encounters, may further transpersonal psychology by supplying a method and opportunity for the human psyche to tap into and assimilate the life-fulfilling, transformational energy of collective unconscious and non-human material.

Additionally, the participants in this study have benefited from the opportunity to re-visit the experiences of encounters during their wilderness rites of passage that invited them to seek psycho-spiritual transformation. As has been true for me in revisiting my own wilderness rites of

passage quest, by remembering and writing about it, I can insure that it can become more alive again. The process has not always been pleasant; in fact, it has involved painful elements of spiritual emergence. Nevertheless, I believe that its overall effect has been restorative and healing. I believe that, in a similar way, participants in this study benefited by honoring those sacred moments in their lives. It is my hope that many others, beyond those involved in this study, will benefit from the reporting of this research.

### *Definitions*

This study uses terms that have very specific meanings to the study. Following are a list of some of these terms that were defined as this study unfolded:

*Encounters with the potential to cause a psycho-spiritual life transformation* are defined as experiences or series of experiences that an individual believes to have caused or, from his point of view, should have caused, a psycho-spiritual transformation in his life.

*Modern wilderness rites of passage quest* is a multi-day retreat an individual undertakes in the wilderness during which she consciously and, preferably, ceremonially seeks for some understanding of her life purpose. A portion of the quest usually involves some time alone, for a duration of one to several days, and may involve fasting.

*Mystical experiences* are defined as those experiences that involve nonlinear time, synchronicity, being out of body, or other phenomena not understood by modern science. Such experiences are often encountered in either normal or non-altered states of consciousness.

*Nature* is defined as a broad interpretation of the term, inclusive of the *sacred internal/sacred external* that is variously known by the name of God, Goddess, Spirit, Yahweh, Allah, Buddha Nature, and other terms created by humanity in its attempts to name the Divine element that exists in all humans, other-than-human beings, and all that is. The term nature (not

capitalized), as distinguished from the capitalized term, means the wilderness of the woods, mountains, seas, deserts, or non-built parts of our world. This study examines, in part, the question of whether nature provides a path to Nature.

*Psycho-spiritual transformations in life* are defined, as extensively adapted from Coburn (1996, p. 14), as those transformations that impacted the deep self and led to an experience of greater authenticity, serenity, and meaning in life for the participants. Indications of psycho-spiritual changes included changes in attitude, values, vocation, or lifestyle caused by a change of heart.

*Subjective lived experience* comprises an individual's own remembered feelings and emotions that occurred in association with a remembered event. Such feelings may occur during, before, and after the remembered event but are either directly a precursor to the event, experienced while the event happens, or resulting from the happening of the event.

### *Overview of the Chapters of the Study*

Chapter 2 contains a brief review of the available literature regarding modern wilderness rites of passage. It explores the various explanations of the source of potentially transformational encounters experienced during a modern wilderness rites of passage quest. It examines and compares the structure of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest with that of the mythical hero's journey and explores whether that archetypal structure may be conducive to the reception of potentially transformational encounters. The chapter also examines the power of transformation that exists in humans' connection with Nature. Chapter 3 explains the Intuitive Inquiry research method planned for this study. It discusses the procedures that were employed in gathering and analyzing data for the study. The chapter also contains a description of my process of engaging with the topic of the study and identifies the lenses I wore as I began the research. In chapter 4, I

descriptively summarize the interviews with each participant, including some of my intuitive impressions of the interviews. I also include a thematic content analysis of the interviews and classify the themes into categories corresponding to the questions the study asks. In chapter 5, I examine my preliminary lenses, the transformation and refinement of those lenses as a result of this study, and my new lenses. In chapter 6, I reexamine the literature in view of the study's findings and integrate the findings with the literature. Finally, in the conclusion, I outline what the study revealed and what mistakes I made in the design or conduct of the study and identify areas for further research indicated by the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter contains an examination of the available literature on modern wilderness rites of passage. The concept of potentially transformational encounters developed in this chapter builds on Jung's (1968) suggestion that such encounters are contained in dreams, active imagination, and altered states of consciousness. The literature shows that questers frequently report opportunities for transformational encounters found in dreams, active imagination, and altered states of consciousness during their participation in modern wilderness rites of passage. Participants in a modern wilderness rites of passage quest may experience potentially transformational encounters sourced in the material of the collective unconscious during the wilderness rites of passage quest, in part because the modern wilderness rites of passage quest borrows some of its structure from the archetypal hero's journey. Therefore, this chapter also contains an examination of the available literature regarding the types of transformational encounters that may be experienced by participants of modern wilderness rites of passage quests. While substantial literature is available about modern wilderness rites of passage, structures of modern wilderness rites of passage quests, and the experience of the modern wilderness rites of passage quests, there is a need to add to literature on the transformational nature of the experience of the participant.

### *A Modern Wilderness Rites of Passage Quest*

In 1977, Foster and Little (1989, 1992, 1998) founded a modern wilderness rites of passage program, "The School of Lost Borders." This program popularized modern wilderness rites of passage. Outward Bound, founded in Wales in the 1940s by Kurt Hahn and brought to the United States in the 1950s by Josh Miner, is based upon the principles of hands-on learning through outdoor adventure. It adopted similar programs for troubled youth under the premise that

the lack of rites of passage in modern Western culture may contribute to the children's misbehavior and that enacting such rites may begin to rectify their problems (Bacon, 1983). Organizations such as Animas Valley Institute, founded by Plotkin (2003) in 1980, as well as several other providers, 37 of which are listed in Appendix G (Wilderness Guides Council, 2007), offer programs of contemporary wilderness rites of passage.

Historically, wilderness rites of passage or some similar form of rites of passage have been a part of the human experience since the Paleolithic period (Armstrong, 2005). Campbell (1959) wrote that

It has been the chief function of much of the mythological lore and ritual practice of our species to carry the mind, feelings, and powers of action of the individual across the critical thresholds for the two decades of infancy to adulthood, and from old age to death; to supply the sign stimuli adequate to release the life energies of the one who is no longer what he was for his new task, the new phase, in a manner appropriate to the well-being of the group. (pp. 60-61)

The rites of passage for ancient human beings were terrifying, even to those living in the already perilous hunters' world of early human existence. Armstrong (2005) explained that

Initiates are buried in the ground, or in a tomb; they are told that they are about to be devoured by a monster, or killed by a spirit. They are subjected to intense physical pain and darkness; they are usually circumcised or tattooed. The experience is so intense and traumatic that an initiate is changed forever. (p. 34)

She continued by writing that such trauma could cause a regressive disorganization of the personality, which, if properly controlled, can promote a constructive reorganization of the forces deep within the person (the soul). Many indigenous groups, unaffected by modernity, continue the practice of rites of passage for their pubescent young men and women (Brown, T., 1993; Eliade, 1965; Neihardt, 1988; Somè, 1994; van Gennep, 1960).

Importantly, the modern wilderness rites of passage quest, although derived from the same source of the human impulse to be connected to one's soul through Nature as are

indigenous practices, is different from the vision quest performed by indigenous populations. Much has been written about the traditions of the Native American and other peoples who have practiced vision quests or wilderness rites of passage (e.g., Bastien, 2003; Brown, T., 1993; Eliade, 1965; Kuckkahn, 2005; MacEowen, 2002; Neihardt, 1988; Somè, 1994; van Gennep, 1960; Wright, 1997). As Carroll (2007) and Hibbard (2007) noted, non-indigenous people and even modern indigenous humans who have been integrated into modern society experience a traditional vision quest in a manner significantly different from the experiences of indigenous people who have developed in a society permeated with the tradition of rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood by way of a vision quest. Before ever participating in a vision quest, people raised in an indigenous culture absorb ways of knowing that many modern humans first encounter during a modern wilderness rites of passage quest. Shweder (1991) wrote

And it is possible to characterize a large part of the mental life in terms of the particularizing ways peoples constitute and get involved with particulars, thereby giving to those constructed stimuli, task environments, and sociocultural contexts the powers they have to evoke the special responses they evoke. (p. 79)

Feminist writers such as Nielson (1990) and Smith (2005) remind researchers of the necessity of being cognizant of such different ways of knowing when examining an aspect of indigenous culture (such as a vision quest) through the omnipresent lens of one's own culture.

Another difference between indigenous vision quests and modern wilderness rites of passage is that all modern questers expect to return unharmed from their quests. The quester may feel genuine fear in the unfamiliar wilderness, but trained professional guides assure the questers' physical safety. Such is not always the case with indigenous questers. The danger necessary to produce the same level of fear of the wilderness as that experienced by indigenous people who live in the wilderness involves genuinely life-threatening circumstance. An additional difference derives from the fact that much of what the indigenous quester encounters

is considered sacred and the quester does not share it with others, whereas the modern Western quester prefers to “process” her experience by sharing and discussing the experience. The indigenous wilderness rites of passage quest typically provides a rite of passage to young people of a particular community upon reaching puberty, whereas many modern peoples have no rite of passage that helps them move from childhood to adulthood in an explicit way (Bade, 1984; Blos, 1979). The modern wilderness rites of passage quest has arisen to help those who feel that this rite is missing from their personal development (Campbell, 1972).

Plotkin (2008) described a nature-based view of human development. Using the indigenous concept of a medicine wheel, he outlined the course of human life from birth in the east to childhood in the south, wandering in the west, and adulthood in the north, followed by death in the east as a completion of the cycle. The wilderness rites of passage quest is the task of the wanderer in the west: a transition from childhood to adulthood. The west is a place of the setting sun, of darkness, and of soul. As Plotkin (2008) pointed out, “In Western culture, the passage into the Cocoon [the place of the wilderness rites of passage quest], if reached at all, often occurs many years after we obtain the nominal status of ‘adult’” (p. 233). Without the ritualistic descent into the underworld of the soul and the discovery of a life’s purpose, many Westerners are stuck in the south, seeking more toys while calling themselves adults. “The task that lies before the Wanderer—uncovering her soul, her ultimate place in the world—is truly daunting” (Plotkin, 2008, p. 244). A modern wilderness rites of passage quest, a harkening back to a “natural” human developmental step, provides the quester or Wanderer an opportunity, at any age, to get out of her adolescence in the south and discover her soul in the west. Other rites of passage not necessarily involving a passage from the south to the west (e.g., from west to

north) are also significant paths associated with human developmental milestones and may benefit from a wilderness rites of passage ritual.

For the purposes of this study, a modern wilderness rites of passage quest is defined as a multi-day wilderness retreat in which the participant consciously and, preferably, ceremonially seeks for some understanding of her life purpose. A portion of the quest usually involves some time alone, for 1 to several days, and may involve fasting. “Solitude does not come naturally to many people in egocentric society. . . . Solitude might threaten us with boredom or an anxiety that could lead to difficult truths, unfinished emotional business and the shadow side of our human nature” (Plotkin, 2008, p. 276). The time alone is significant because, as Atchinson (1998) found, purposeful solitude has a restorative aspect.

Being in the wilderness, especially for modern humans, also promotes an element of fear, according to one theory or approach, that may be necessary to invoke the potential numinous experience of the wilderness rites of passage quest. Newberg, d’Aquili, and Rause (2001) explained that, when the brain has reached excessively high levels of activity by mirroring the unfamiliar and frightening wildness of nature, it exerts an inhibitory effect on neural flow. In other words, it slows down the rate of brain activity. The part of the brain most affected by this slow-down is the “orientation association area [posterior superior parietal lobe]—the part of the brain that helps us distinguish the self from the rest of the world” (p. 87). This “softening of the self,” they observed, enables the experience of archetypal encounters during the modern wilderness rites of passage quest. Similarly, fasting causes disafferentation and “softening of the self” (Newberg, d’Aquili, & Rause, 2001, pp. 87-95). Another theory suggests that being in wilderness invokes a sense of homecoming or returning that relaxes and opens the self to other ways of learning (Abram, 1996; Gomes & Kanner, 1995; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

Typically, a modern wilderness rites of passage quest will be guided by experienced wilderness rites of passage guides and will involve a group of several people. The questers will spend a few days together participating in ceremonial practices designed to help them let go of their past and childhood and prepare for their future and adulthood. Plotkin (2003) described a modern wilderness rites of passage quest in this way:

Since earliest times, people have received profound insight about themselves and their world by means of a vision quest, whose basic, universal elements include:

- a remote wilderness setting
- fasting from food and, sometimes, water
- solitude (no other *human* companions)
- direct exposure to the forms and forces of nature (i.e., only enough clothing and shelter necessary for physical survival and basic comfort, and no distractions from ceremonial intentions, no items of entertainment, reading materials, et cetera)
- attention-focusing and consciousness-shifting ceremonies, prayers, and practices
- a significant period of time—at least a full day, but usually three or four days and up to as much as several weeks (for which case, small amounts of simple foods are eaten). (pp. 213-214)

The wilderness rites of passage quest in this study reflect Plotkin's definition of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest.

#### *Theoretical Ground: Potentially Transformational Encounters*

Central to this study is the idea that potentially transformational encounters originate from a source best described by Jung (1968). Jung claimed that all humans are connected to the collective unconscious through common human experiences:

In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconscious as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually, but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents. (p. 47)

For the purposes of this study, it is not assumed that the unconscious is "identical" in all individuals, as Jung stated; rather, it is assumed that all individuals may experience the collective

unconscious in unique, but similar, ways. Archetypes refer to the potential “pre-existent forms” (1968, p. 47) of human experience. “Certain essential qualities mark humanness in all times and places—certain themes and patterns called the human archetypes” (Plotkin, 2003, p. 30). This study pursues the theory that potentially transformational encounters experienced on a modern wilderness rites of passage quest constitute archetypal calls to transform from one preexistent form of human expression, the life currently being experienced, to another preexistent form of humanness. Abrams and Zwieg (1990), Hillman (1975, 1996), Hollis (1998), Jung (1968), and Pearson (1986, 1991) enumerate these preexistent forms, or themes and patterns, from a psychological viewpoint. Examples of psychological archetypes include ego, anima, animus, self, soul, daimon, other, shadow, innocent, orphan, warrior, caregiver, seeker, lover, destroyer, creator, ruler, magician, sage, and fool. Archetypes are represented by all of the great human storytellers throughout history and from around the world as mythological characters (Campbell, 1968).

Stories and myths serve as vehicles for the archetypes of the collective unconscious. Myths serve as a “metaphoric guide” for human understanding of personal, collective, and sacred journeys through which life offers its several opportunities for transformation. Building on Jung’s theories of the collective unconscious, Lowenthal (2004) argued that myths are products of the “collective imagination and experience” (p. 65). Taking these theories one step further, and drawing heavily on the writings of Campbell (1968), this study proposes that myths come from the material of the collective unconscious as archetypes. Many of the myths that have been passed down from generation to generation involve the journeys or quests of archetypal heroes who experienced encounters that engendered transformation (Campbell, 1959). This chapter

contains an examination of the structure of these mythical journeys and compares them with the structure of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest.

Campbell (1968) and other Jungians purport to have discovered that all of the archetypes of these storytellers are necessarily psychological in nature. This study considers the possibility that such human archetypes may also be derived in part from non-human sources. Grimes (2000) wrote: “I reject the sexism and cultural imperialism of the heroic model propounded by Campbell and find the Jungian tendency toward purely interiorized initiations precious and disembodied” (p. 144). Grimes made the point that not all of the archetypal information, including that derived from transformational encounters that is accessed during an initiation such as a wilderness rites of passage quest, necessarily originates as interior to humans. He noted that it appears from human report that sources other than human ones contribute to the collective unconscious—that humans can tap into the universal collective unconscious of all beings: human beings, non-human beings, and even inanimate beings. Grimes (2006) wrote

The import of this ethnographic testimony is that ritual participants [such as wilderness rites of passage questers] believe ritual activity enables them to cultivate a bond with animals and plants, even rocks, mountains, bodies of water and other holy places. . . . They realize that they are not more powerful than other creatures, so the human task is not only to use creatures but also to be receptive to their teachings. (p. 133)

Contrary to the assertions in Grimes’ accusations, Campbell (1988) did recognize, at least to some extent, the non-interior contribution of animals. In an interview with Moyers, he said, “We have today to learn to get back into accord with the wisdom of nature and realize again our brotherhood with the animals and with the water and with the sea” (p. 31). The wilderness rites of passage quest is a ritual that goes into the heart of Nature and invites non-human participants to mix their collective wisdom with that of collective human wisdom for the benefit of humans seeking messages.

Shamans have long believed that non-human animals also have wisdom, energy, and power to share with their human brothers (Harner, 1980; Kakar, 1982; Kalweit, 1988). For the American Plains Indians,

Animals are believed to be members of specific nations, such as the Buffalo Nation, the Deer Nation, the Mouse Nation, and the Ant Nation. All living and nonliving things belong to their own nation. Plants and animals are intelligent in the way of their kind, with all the native cunning and intelligence necessary to raise their young and perpetuate their nations. All animals have the means of communicating with one another as well as with humans: “if we have the ears to listen” is a common expression. (Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995, pp. 114-115)

It should be considered that the material of the human collective unconscious is not the only source of information that may be archetypal in nature. Human archetypes may be informed by the archetypes of other “Nations.” Furthermore, as Grimes (2006) and Swan (1992) suggested, even seemingly inanimate elements of nature such as rock, mountains, and rivers may make their own contributions to the material of a deeper level of commonality, a deeper, or universal, collective unconsciousness. A common element of “being” is shared by all beings—human, animals, plants, insects, and inanimate beings. Elements of a universal collective unconscious exist below or inform the material of the human collective unconscious. Human beings miss out on the wisdom of their fellow beings if they approach the natural world with a sense of “species arrogance” (Mack, 1995). For the purpose of this study, references to the material of the collective unconscious include the idea that other-than-human, as well as human, beings inform such material.

#### *Sources of Transformational Encounters on a Wilderness Rites of Passage Quest*

Most unconscious material (collective and personal, of human and non-human sources) presents itself in symbolic form. Jung (1968) suggested that the deeper or closer the source of unconscious material lies to the collective unconscious the less likely it is that it will reveal itself

in everyday language and the more likely it is that it will demonstrate itself in the form of archetypal symbols. He postulated that the main sources of archetypal symbols are dreams, active imagination, and “the fantasies observed in trance states” (pp. 48-50). Importantly, questers are exposed to all of these sources of transformational encounters during a modern wilderness rites of passage quest.

*Dreams as transformational encounters.* Jung (1963, 1964, 1968) relied heavily on examples of dreams to demonstrate the existence of the collective unconscious and the archetypal content thereof. He suggested that there are regular dreams and “‘big’ dreams” (1968, p. 306). The regular dreams draw on the content of the personal unconscious; whereas, “big” dreams tap into the archetypal content of the collective unconsciousness. Modern neuroscience verifies the existence of different kinds of dreams with different restorative features (Crick & Mitcheson, 1986). Taylor (1992, 1998) provided techniques to help individuals work with the images and symbols of dreams in attempts to discover the symbolic messages of regular dreams and the archetypal messages that may be contained within the contents of “big” dreams. Taylor (1998) argued that archetypal symbolism is associated with dreaming messages. He noted that this universality of archetypal symbolism is revealed in the “astonishing unanimity” of the world’s myths and narratives involving human communication with the divine through dreams. He also observed that in these myths the divine communicated with humans more often through dreams than through wakefulness and that dream communication always proved to be more reliable. He maintained that dreams do not serve our egos but instead connect us more consciously to the “deepest and most profound energies of our lives” (p. 48). In other words, while some dreams provide a connection between consciousness and the personal unconscious, other dreams provide a direct connection between consciousness and the collective unconscious,

sometimes to the consternation of the ego (Hillman, 1979). The wilderness rites of passage quester has the critical task of recognizing the symbolic language of his dreams as potential encounters with the material of the collective unconscious in order to understand the gift he will bring back to his common day life.

Many modern wilderness rites of passage questers report experiencing vivid, memorable dreams during the threshold or solo portion of their quests (Brensinger, 2002; Clements, 1992; Foster & Little, 1984, 1989, 1992, 1998; Plotkin, 2003). Foster and Little (1992) suggested that among the most important reasons an individual undertakes a wilderness rites of passage quest is to dream:

One of the reasons you came to the Great Mother [the threshold phase of the wilderness rites of passage quest] was to dream. . . . Your collective unconscious, your “dream oracle,” creates the dream for you to remember. The Oracle is very wise and seeks to help you grow into a fuller understanding of your place on Earth. (p. 48)

Dream messages that occur during the sacred time of a wilderness rites of passage quest contain potentially powerful archetypal material and may be distinguished from everyday dreams because of this power. Wilderness rites of passage dreamers may encounter archetypal material in their powerful or “big” dreams. Remembering and integrating these dreams may constitute transformational experiences.

*Active imagination as transformational encounters.* In a manner similar to that of dreams, although not as universally experienced by humans because of its active component, active imagination supplies transformational encounters with archetypal material (Jung, 1968). Plotkin (2003) pointed out that

for many Westerners, use of the imagination is an unfamiliar skill. Some people have a great difficulty, at first, accessing their deep images; they may have spent too much of their lives relying on thinking, or perhaps were taught as children that imagination was dangerous, bad or foolish. (p. 149)

In order to overcome the cultural restrictions many Westerners experience when trying to imagine actively, Johnson (1986) recommended a four-step process to make engaging in active imagination easier: (a) begin in an established place in the imagination and ask for a psychopomp guide, such as a “power animal” or helper; (b) dialogue with the unconscious material encountered, do not follow a script, and be prepared to be surprised; (c) negotiate the integration of the unconscious material with the ego; and (d) ritualistically welcome the unconscious material into consciousness. He advised that such activity is not to be undertaken lightly: “The great powers of the collective unconscious are so overpowering that we can be suddenly swept away by a flood of primitive energy that seizes the conscious mind” (p. 192). The wilderness rites of passage quester will usually find himself exposed to his active imagination and its transformational encounters.

The threshold phase of the wilderness rites of passage quest (described in more detail below) provides the necessary elements Johnson (1986) recommended for active imagination. The “established place” to begin is the sacred place selected by the quester for the threshold or solo portion of the quest. Foster and Little (1992) suggested of the quest that “in your sacred place you will hold communion with the Great Mother” (p. 44). The psychopomp guide may be a *power animal* that is encountered by deep image journeying before the quester ventures forth into the threshold of the wilderness rites of passage quest. Plotkin (2003) maintained that power animals are the most effective inner guides to healing, growth, and soul work (p. 145). Gagan (1998) discussed the process of journeying to meet power animal guides and Jung (1963) introduced his readers to his own “gurus,” psychopomp guides, one of which is a large black snake he named Salome. This tapping into the energy of a power animal psychopomp guide provides an example of non-human wisdom informing the material of the collective unconscious.

Wilderness rites of passage questers are instructed to follow Johnson's (1986) admonition to "dialogue with the unconscious material" of active imagination by engaging in conversation with Nature, seeking messages from Nature, and witnessing their reflections on Nature (Abram, 1996; Foster & Little, 1992).

During the threshold period of a quest, the quester may find transformational encounters in the natural world as it becomes a mirror of the unconscious material the quester projects onto it as Other (Plotkin, 2003). Davis (2003) explained the mirroring process this way:

The psychological concept of mirroring is one of the means by which wilderness affects experience. All environments mirror us back to ourselves, reinforcing certain qualities, attitudes, and self-concepts. Familiar environments reflect familiar roles and identities. The more unfamiliar the environment, the greater the potential for deep change. . . . The shell of the defensive ego begins to evaporate. . . . This dissolution allows one's essential nature to emerge or for the soul to descend more deeply into one's life and world. (p. 11)

In the course of conversing with the Earth and its non-human creatures, the wilderness rites of passage participant will experience encounters with them within which he will gain understanding about himself. Bartocci and Dein (2005) stated, "The union of the person with nature may be described in secular terms but the experience still has the quality of self-boundary loss" (p. 546). This loss of self-boundary opens the quester to "listen" to Nature.

So, enter your conversations with the Others with the intention of learning about them and developing a relationship, but don't be surprised if you thereby discover more about yourself—perhaps by what the Other tells you or shows you, but, just as likely, by what the conversation draws out of you. (Plotkin, 2003, p. 169)

Plotkin (2008) furthered this concept of discovering more about oneself from reflected Nature:

It's important, then, to distinguish ego projection from soul reflection. The latter surprises us, even stuns us; it's not what we were expecting or hoping for. It's not an answer we would have given ourselves. A soul reflection, unlike a projection, seems too big for us and too difficult to embody. It feels as much like a burden as a blessing. (p. 277)

In addition, the quester must consider that, in addition to her transformational encounters with Nature by way of the quester's reflected projections, she may experience such encounters with

the wisdom of the non-human entities in Nature. The quester, by losing her sense of self and giving that over to Nature, will in the process actually discover more about herself and be surprised by a transformational encounter that is bigger than herself.

For Johnson's (1986) next stage of active imagination, he suggested negotiating the integration of the unconscious material with the ego. Souls are not adept at modern human language but speak to the ego through symbolic language similar to that of dreams. Interpreting the potentially transformational encounters of a wilderness rites of passage quest for the ego is similar to understanding the messages of a dream. Plotkin (2003) suggested some methods for questers to negotiate this interpretation and integration:

Because the image is borrowed from a waking sensory experience, the conscious self can more readily grasp its symbolic significance. Once conscious, the image can then be further assimilated by the ego through thinking (e.g., associations, analysis, interpretation), feeling (e.g., encouraging the emotions evoked by the image), or imagination (e.g., deep imagery journeys). (p. 221)

Therefore, as a modern wilderness rites of passage quester engages the unconscious material he encounters on a wilderness rites of passage quest by thinking, feeling, and imaging, he will begin to assimilate that projected unconscious material and interspecies communication (Other) into his Self. If a portion of that projected unconscious material emanates from the quester's accessing the universal collective unconscious, then he may encounter an archetypal experience. Riordan (2002) discussed the process of integrating the transformative aspects of wilderness experiences, a process very similar to integrating an aspect of Nature encountered during active imagination.

Johnson's (1986) final step of using active imagination as a method of encountering archetypal material is ritualistically to welcome the unconscious material into consciousness. Rituals have always been critically important to all rites of passage (Eliade, 1965; Grimes, 2000,

2006; Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1960). Rituals and ceremonies are deeply rooted in meaningful symbols that arouse the deepest desires, griefs, and fears in the participants. The symbols found in rituals are representations of the collective unconscious. In this sense, ritual and ceremony are forms of archetypal communication. A wilderness rites of passage quest, as a rite of passage, is a ceremony with a purpose of archetypal exposure and conversation. Rituals, therefore, provide a method of symbolic communication and help questers integrate archetypal experiences of active imagination into consciousness (Davis, 2003; Foster & Little, 1984, 1989, 1992, 1998; Plotkin, 2003).

*Altered states of consciousness as transformational encounters.* Jung (1968) suggested that collective unconscious material (as well as personal unconscious material) might also be encountered in altered states of consciousness. Tart (1990, 1997)) described the limitation of accepting the discrete state of ordinary consciousness (d-OSC) as “reality.” Tart’s d-OSC, or the consensus reality, is dependent upon “state specific science” and conscious thought. Generally, except to psychologists following in the traditions of Jung or Freud, little or no value is given to unconscious or collective unconscious material in the ordinary realm. The primary purpose of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest is to bring to the ordinary realm the gifts of the individual or collective unconsciousness. Altered states of consciousness are vehicles, similar to the vehicles of dreams or active imagination, with which one may encounter the archetypal material of the collective unconscious.

Plotkin (2003) described the condition experienced during altered states of consciousness induced by the modern wilderness rites of passage quest as a “radical shift in awareness” (p. 222). An altered state of consciousness can bring about this radical shift. The fast that many questers undergo during their journey is designed to bring about this altered state (Foster &

Little, 1989; Plotkin, 2003). From the point of view of neurophysiology, “The intense physical exertion of more strenuous ritual behaviors— . . . the rigorous ‘wilderness rites of passage’ of various native tribes—can often lead to much deeper levels of unitary experience, often characterized by trance states and hyperlucid visions” (Newberg, d’Aquili, & Rause, 2001, p. 96). The rigors of a wilderness rites of passage quest enhance the opportunity to experience transformational encounters by inducing an altered state of consciousness, one of the points of access to the material of the collective unconscious.

In the altered state induced by a wilderness rites of passage fast, the ego has been weakened because it is in unfamiliar territory. The ego is a construct created by humans—the human psychological process develops the ego. Because the ego, often an arrested developmental structure in modern humans, is not found in nature, exposing it to nature does not reinforce its reality. The soul, on the other hand, is natural; it originated from elements of Nature. When the ego is not around other humans, not around other human constructs, and has to go without instead of getting what it wants, it weakens, whereas, the soul gains strength in its natural environment. It senses a returning home, a reuniting with its natural state, and a remembering of its place in the world and in the cosmos (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). The thinking mind, the ego, becomes quiet and the sensing soul becomes active. The soul, in this state, taps into the universal collective unconscious and listens to the non-human elements of Nature. It “sees” archetypal images in its natural world and, with the ego quieted or shut down, the images are “perceived” more readily by the conscious mind (Davis, 2003; Foster & Little, 1989, 1992; Plotkin, 2003, 2008).

The ritualistic activities of maintaining sacred space, fasting, and concentrating in solitude causes the orientation association area of the brain to become more deafferented, and the

sense of self is softened (Newberg, et al., 2001). Interestingly, d'Aquili and Newberg (2000) described the neurological effects of altered states of consciousness, such as those encountered during a wilderness rites of passage quest, in terms of archetypes. For example, they described an Archetype of Dissolution, which involves the fear of losing one's sense of self, as in near-death experiences. However, "if allowed to take its course, the Archetype of Dissolution is followed by the Archetype of Transcendent Integration" (d'Aquili & Newberg, 2000, p. 48). The Archetype of Transcendent Integration is the hoped-for personal integration of an archetypal encounter with the material of the collective unconscious.

As with the mix of personal and collective unconscious material encountered in dreams and active imagination, the quester benefits from integrating both the personal unconscious material and the collective unconscious archetypal material of a heightened or non-ordinary reality into his consciousness, incorporating the Other into the Self (Wood, 2007a). The literature is replete with examples of participants who encounter archetypal material in the vision quest-induced altered state of consciousness (Brensinger, 2002; Clements, 1992; Foster & Little, 1989, 1992, 1998; Plotkin, 2003).

*Mystical sources of transformational encounters.* A quester may not be in an altered state of consciousness, dreaming, or actively imagining and may still experience an encounter with archetypal material. Exceptional external influences may directly present archetypal material to wilderness rites of passage questers in conscious states of mind. The Plains Indians of North America, for example, believe that animals may even communicate intelligently with and help humans while in their *living* form (Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995). White (1997) and Cardeña, Lynn, & Krippner (2000) wrote of exceptional human experiences (EHEs) that cannot easily be explained simply as encounters with the collective unconscious. Furthermore, such experiences

are often encountered in normal or non-altered states of consciousness. EHEs involve experiences with nonlinear time, synchronicity, being out of body, and many others that questers have reported as EHEs occurring during their wilderness rites of passage (Wood, 2008). Braud (2003) presented several studies in which humans in conscious states of mind and remote from each other communicated by means not understood by modern physics. Questers may receive such communication during the course of their quest, possibly even from a non-human source. EHE encounters, including distant mental influence, have the potential to contain archetypal material. Additionally, some researchers suggest that archetypal material may be encountered mystically by individuals through the application of their intentions and their expectations in non-altered states of consciousness (Braud & Anderson, 1998, 2002; Palmer, 1998). Hence questers may encounter archetypal experiences emanating from mystical sources in non-altered states of consciousness.

Participants in modern wilderness rites of passage have the opportunity to encounter archetypal material through their dreams, active imagination, and altered states of consciousness: exactly the sources Jung (1968) suggested exploring for material from the collective unconscious. Expanding on Jung's theory, this study suggests that the collective unconscious may contain non-human material, as well. This study also suggests that mystical sources of archetypal material may be encountered while not dreaming, actively imagining, or in an altered state of consciousness. The primary purpose of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest, like that of its indigenous predecessor, is to induce, or at least invite, encounters with the material of the universal collective unconscious and mystical sources, the substance of archetypes. The need for a study directly linking the experience of modern wilderness rites of passage questers with potential transformation experiences such as archetypal encounters is clear.

*Potential Transformational Encounters on a Wilderness Rites of Passage Quest*

This section contains a description of several ways of conceptualizing the kinds of encounters one may experience during a wilderness rites of passage quest. These experiences may provide either elements of or the foundation for psycho-spiritual transformation.

*The hero's journey.* A typical modern wilderness rites of passage quest consists of three primary stages or phases. The first phase is severance, the middle phase is initiation or threshold, and the final phase is return and reincorporation (Clements, 1992; Davis, 2003; Foster & Little, 1989, 1992; Plotkin, 2003). This three-part structure of the wilderness rites of passage quest finds its roots in the archetypal journey of the hero. Campbell (1968) surveyed hero myths from around the world and concluded that a commonality exists among the many variations of the stories. He divided the common adventure of the hero into three stages: the departure, the initiation, and the return. An archetypal hero begins by separating or severing herself from the everyday world. Initiation takes place in an unfamiliar, supernatural world where unusual experiences occur. Finally, the hero returns or reincorporates into the common day world with a gift to bestow. Others have noted the similarity between the three phases of the hero's myth and the three phases of the wilderness rites of passage quest. Van Gennep (1960) identified three phases that constitute all initiatory ceremonies: severance, threshold, and incorporation.

Foster and Little (1992) also argued that the structure of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest draws upon "the power of ancient archetype and symbol" in order to provide the quester with the tools needed to create his or her own myths and ceremonies of passage and confirmation (p. 22). The modern wilderness rites of passage quest possesses the formula of this archetypal structural formula, and many questers report that they did indeed experience the quest

as their own mythical hero's journey: they left their world behind, faced challenges in a supernatural world, and returned with a gift for their people (e.g., in Foster & Little, 1989, 1992; Plotkin, 2003, 2008).

*The calling.* Before the first phase, a period of preparation exists that could be said to occupy a lifetime up to the time of hearing a call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest (Clements, 1992; Davis, 2003; Foster & Little, 1989, 1992; Plotkin, 2003, 2008). Plotkin wrote:

Jungian analysts (and Jung himself) say that it is rare to be ready for the descent to soul . . . until midlife, until, say, our mid-forties. They're probably correct—about modern Euro-Americans, that is. But many nature-based people say *their* youth are ready at puberty. (2008, p. 250)

Campbell (1968) described the nature of the call:

That which has to be faced, is somehow profoundly familiar to the unconscious—though unknown, surprising, and even frightening to the conscious personality—makes itself known; and what formerly was meaningful may become strangely emptied of value. . . . This first stage of the mythical journey—which we have designated the “call to adventure”—signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. (p. 58)

Campbell (1968) also noted that the hero's myth might begin with a call similar to that which may be heard by the potential quester: when she may be strolling along and notice something unusual, or when she simply blunders into it. Campbell (1959) drew upon Freud to argue that blunders, although seemingly occurring by chance, are not mere accidents. Instead, he argued that they are “the result of suppressed desires and conflicts” (p. 51). Likewise, a quester may seek out a modern wilderness rites of passage quest because of some deep stirring in his soul, may chance upon the opportunity and find it very attractive and interesting, or may “blunder” upon the opportunity actually created by his soul. Those who do not respond to the call risk the possibility of suffering the dire consequences of living with a disquieted soul

(Hillman, 1996). Pearson (1991) maintained that, if an individual did not respond to the call, he would experience the archetypal Seeker's call in its shadow forms. To reject the call can be devastating to those who have heard it.

The vast majority of midlife crises might be better understood as overdue calls to adventure, as spiritual opportunities triggered by a personal crisis—an affair, severe job dissatisfaction, an empty nest, or the simple realization one day that you're not going to live forever. (Plotkin, 2008, p. 250)

If the call to adventure is not heeded, perhaps the daimon will create a crisis in order to be heard. Even then, “it is always possible, however, to refuse the call entirely and to turn the ear back to the egocentric interests of unrewarding work, relationships, and pop culture” (Plotkin, 2008, p. 251). Refusing the call results in undiscovered and unfulfilled soul purposes.

*Nature as “supernatural wonder” and “fabulous force.”* The modern wilderness rites of passage quest begins with severance, in which an individual chooses to answer to the call and physically leave home and venture into the wilderness. It involves emotionally and psychologically leaving behind the quester's everyday life and attachments (Clements, 1992; Davis, 2003; Foster & Little, 1989, 1992; Plotkin, 2003). Campbell (1968) demonstrated that the mythical hero similarly leaves her common day world for a supernatural region where she will encounter “fabulous forces” and achieve a decisive victory (p. 30).

In mythical tales, once she has been called and has answered the call, the hero crosses the threshold into the adventure, where she will move in a “dream landscape,” meet ambiguous forms, and endure several trials (Campbell, 1968, p. 97). The second phase of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest, the engagement or threshold, consists of some time alone in the wilderness, which constitutes the dream landscape of the myths because the wilderness presents as an unfamiliar, somewhat frightening place to most modern Westerners (Abram, 1996; Kahn, 2001). “The terrifying forest reveals our fear of our own shadow side or of our inscrutable

future—or both” (Plotkin, 2008, p. 277). The wilderness also provides “a region of supernatural wonder” similar to that of the hero’s mythical landscape, where “fabulous forces are there encountered” (Campbell, 1968, p. 30).

Interestingly, most modern human beings feel they are separated from nature (Shepard, 1982). Humans used to be at home in nature and the wilderness. They felt a deep connection with the Earth. The loss of that connection contributes in part to the psychopathology of modern humans (Metzner, 1995). Fisher (2002) described one of the tasks of the relatively new field of ecopsychology as “a psychological undertaking that essentially says that *we too are nature*” (p. 8). He continued by noting that the philosophical task is “to turn the psyche inside out, locating mind in the world itself—healing our dualism by returning soul to Nature and Nature to soul” (p. 8). The adventurer traveling the mythical hero’s journey often encounters opportunities for turning the psyche inside out. “The Wanderer explores the interweaving of psyche and nature, how a dream or a myth, for example, suggests a landscape or waterscape through which to wander, or a *way* to wander, or an image to seek in his ramblings” (Plotkin, 2008, p. 279). What more “supernatural wonder” could exist than the environment of one’s psyche turned out into the wild and natural world?

The research of Cohen (1997); Davis (1998); Hartig, Mang, & Evans (1991); and Swan (1992) demonstrated that the healing attributes of Nature supply the archetypal “fabulous forces” to the modern wilderness rites of passage quester. Greenway (1995) and Harper (1995) focused on the psychological benefits of interacting with Nature. Riordan (2002) wrote of the transformative aspects of participating in wilderness adventures. For modern humans, the wilderness truly comprises a wondrous, magical place equivalent to the places to which the mythical heroes ventured.

*Trials.* The trials of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest are presented in the forms of fasting from food for a significant period of time and experiencing the unusual direct exposure to the forces of nature. In the manner that Psyche was given several trials to overcome by Aphrodite to win back her beloved Eros (Lowenthal, 2004), wilderness rites of passage participants must overcome solitude (Atchinson, 1998), hunger, and exposure (Brensinger, 2002) in an unfamiliar and challenging (but magical) setting to accomplish the purpose of their quest. Foster and Little (1992) described the trials of a wilderness rites of passage quester in this way:

The heroic passage is a road of trials. Separated, alone, given over to the Great Mother, the hero enters the fearful darkness and confronts the naked self, the apparitions, and shadows of the mortal state of being. Here the solitary battles against the inevitable monsters must be fought. The hero does not court fear; but fear must be faced. The treasure of the quest cannot be found without enduring the despair of ever finding it. The trials of the heroic passage exist because strength and courage exist, but these traits are found only in combination with vulnerability and fear. (p. 133)

Only by facing their fears can wilderness rites of passage participants, like mythical heroes, achieve their goals. Being triumphant in their solitary battles is central to the questers' wilderness rites of passage experience.

Brensinger (2002) wrote in her book, *Earth Dreams: Finding Light in the Shadows*, about the trial of facing her own shadow while shivering in the shade during her own wilderness rites of passage quest. She lost her way when attempting to return to the solo spot she had selected earlier during her quest and instead ended up in a cold, north-facing spot. For 3 days and nights she lived in this shadowy spot, was very uncomfortable, and determined her quest was a total failure. Of this experience, several days after her quest, she wrote:

Suddenly, I saw symbolism in the shadow that had chilled me, and my heart opened as if to an old friend. Far from being an accidental consequence of my poor sense of direction, my heavily shaded power spot now revealed itself as a metaphor for my whole experience, which had thrust me, kicking and screaming, into the figurative/Jungian “shadow” of my psyche—that dark place where I’d stuffed the emotions, the feelings, the traits that I’d deemed unacceptable. (2002, p. 72)

The trials of Brensinger's quest had brought her face to face with "other" parts of herself. Parts that she had rejected as unacceptable. She wrote of how, over the course of several weeks, she incorporated these previously rejected parts of herself into her self-definition and, consequently, felt more whole.

Clements (1992) wrote a dissertation on how enduring the trial of her own wilderness rites of passage quest became a transformative spiritual experience. She quantitatively demonstrated that others experienced similar transformation by enduring the trial of their own quests. She compared the before and after psychological tests of a group of wilderness rites of passage participants with those of a group of transpersonal psychology students. Her study revealed that the quest participants showed statistically significant increases in spirituality and power as a result of their trials experienced during the quests. She attributed the increase in spirituality to the archetypal structure of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest and the quests' borrowing of the concept of the presence of the sacred in daily acts from the Native American traditions ingrained in the quest. Clements measured the increase in personal power using the Self-Esteem Inventory instrument. She wrote, "In the original vision quest tradition, power was given by contact with the spirits" (p. 131). The "spirits" with which modern questers may have contact could be mystical forces, as discussed above, or could comprise contact with "other" parts of themselves, the eventual integration of which improves the psychic health of the individual and her self-esteem.

Atchinson (1998) wrote a heuristic dissertation about restorative solitude that reported experiences of spiritual healing and transformation encountered in purposeful solitude. She wrote, "This study showed that people can create for themselves a health-giving, nurturing environment that honors their own individual needs and qualities. Restorative

solitude, as practiced by my coresearcher, is shown to be accessible and do-able. People can develop their own methods of meeting their needs for solitude” (p. 333). Solitude, such as that encountered during the solo portion of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest, allows individuals the self-reflection necessary, as Atchinson (1998) explained, to discover those abandoned parts of themselves. She reminded her readers of the comment Jesus made in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, “If you bring forth what is within you—what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you” (p. 333). She concluded that the trial of solitude provides a helpful tool in humans’ constant search for meaning and well-being.

While these empirical examples provide evidence of transformative archetypal trials during a wilderness rites of passage quest or solitude, the studies were not designed, as this one is, directly to link these experiences with psycho-spiritual transformation. The value of this study in relationship to this topic of psycho-spiritual transformation is the establishment of that link between the wilderness rites of passage experiences and the psycho-spiritual transformation resulting from those experiences.

*Death and rebirth.* Armstrong (2005) noted that:

The myth tells us what we have to do if we want to become a fully human person. Every single one of us has to be a hero at some time in our lives. . . . You cannot be a hero unless you are prepared to give up everything; there is no ascent to the heights without a prior descent into darkness, no new life without some form of death. (p. 37)

The wilderness rites of passage quest, as a mythical hero’s journey, is a form of dying to that which has been and a rebirth to that which is new. Plotkin (2008) noted that, “The Wanderer knows that, in entering the Cocoon [place of the wilderness rites of passage quest], she is preparing to die (psycho-sociologically) in order to be reborn” (p. 264). The customary ways of loving and hating, old contracts, parental wounding, grief associated with personal losses or

collective losses (war, environmental destruction, class suppression, etc.) are all confronted and surrendered in service of a greater self. “Untied from the past, you dwell more fully in the present, better able to savor the gifts of the world” (Plotkin, 2008, p. 265). One becomes “reborn” to the possibilities of life afforded in the opportunities ahead.

There are many myths of a descent or death and an ascent or rebirth. The Christian story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is perhaps the best-known example of such a myth. Similarly, as Lowenthal (2004) reminded us, Psyche had to descend to the depths of Hades, the land of the dead, before she could regain her new life with Eros. Campbell (1959) noted: “It is obvious that the idea of death-and-rebirth, rebirth through ritual and with a fresh organization of profoundly impressed sign stimuli, is an extremely ancient one in the history of culture” (p. 66). This death-and-rebirth motif is deeply ingrained in the collective human psyche; it is a part of the collective unconscious. As such, it is a potential archetypal encounter for a modern wilderness rites of passage quester.

*New name.* Another archetypal aspect of the structure of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest is found in the gift of a name. Pearson (1991) explained: “In the most basic way, we create by ‘naming,’ by the power of language to determine thought. . . . The power of naming is profound” (pp. 170-171). This is evident in the archetypal Jacob of the Old Testament and the Torah, who, after wrestling all night with an angel, was told by God, “Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel” (Genesis, 35:10). When Jacob had successfully endured the trial of his hero’s journey, he was given a new name indicative of his accomplishment. Similarly, modern wilderness rites of passage questers are taught that their search will confer a name upon them. The quester will become what he has been seeking, and he will have the opportunity to exercise the awareness

necessary for self-naming (Foster & Little, 1992). The modern wilderness rites of passage quester often returns from the threshold phase with a new name conferred upon him by some archetypal force.

*Gifts or visions.* Both the archetypal hero and the wilderness rites of passage questers undertake their journeys and undergo trials in search for something. Campbell (1968) described this quest as a search for the “Indestructible Body,” the permanent, undying part of the hero’s soul (p. 177). The journeyer seeks an archetypal boon, “soul and body food [or the] ineffable teaching of the beatitude beyond imagination,” (pp. 177-178) some ability or instruction to interact with the collective unconscious that will benefit the quester. However, this boon is not for the quester alone. As Pearson (1991) so aptly pointed out, central to the hero’s journey is the “willingness to sacrifice and be sacrificed for the healing or betterment of the world” (p. 142). The hero must return to her community to share the wisdom gained on her journey. Similarly, the modern wilderness rites of passage quester does not undertake the quest for himself alone. Participants in modern wilderness rites of passage seek a vision, which takes many different forms for different seekers but has at its core the “supreme boon” described by Campbell (1968) above. Foster and Little (1989) argued that, if the quester does not bring something good to her community upon returning from her quest, she has no reason to undertake the quest in the first place. Foster and Little (1992) also suggested that what the modern wilderness rites of passage questers seek is an insight into the nature of things. They went on to describe “Vision”:

Vision is the ability to see the future. Vision is the ability to dream. Vision is the surging upward of personal creative energy. Vision is one’s life work. Vision is a marrow-deep feeling, a knowing, a recognition of self, a realization of what you can do. Vision is transcendent, mystical knowledge—cosmic consciousness. Vision is the sight of the sun rising in the east to answer the hope that another day will come. Vision is a series of “ahas!” about what your life has been and could be. (p. 55)

All these variations of visions offer the modern wilderness rites of passage quester the archetypal “supreme boon” in a form most meaningful to the individual quester and “his people.”

Finally, when the trials have been endured and the vision received, the hero returns to his community.

Then one day it dawns on him that he cannot devote the rest of his life solely to exploring the underworld mysteries. He cannot remain forever on the periphery of society as a student of soul. He realizes, with some shock and grief, that the time is coming when he must gather what he has learned (and has become) in the [wilderness rites of passage quest]—however inadequate this might feel—and fully return to his community. (Plotkin, 2008, p. 299)

Campbell (1968) argued that, upon her return, the hero begins the labor of bringing the “runes of wisdom” back to the community where it will aid in the renewal of that community (p. 193). He maintained that, in the archetypal myths, “the values and distinctions that in normal life seem important disappear with the terrifying assimilation of the self into what was formerly only otherness” (p. 217). In this way, the archetypal hero is faced with bridging the gap between the divine world of her journey and the human world of her home. She can only come to realize that they are the same world, and thus translate her “gift for her people,” when she assimilates or incorporates what she thought was “Other”—projections of the collective unconscious—into her Self. Likewise, the participant in the modern wilderness rites of passage quest must return to the human world. Foster and Little (1992) warned that, upon returning from a quest, “the ‘real thing’ awaits you, the sea of indifference and confusion that you know only too well as ‘civilization’” (p. 59). Returning to the “real thing” with the task of integrating gifts received on a quest is often daunting.

Like the archetypal hero, the modern quester must unite the two worlds through incorporation. Riordan (2002) wrote of this process of integrating transformative aspects of participating in wilderness adventures. This process can often take time, even up to several years.

D'Aquili and Newberg (2000) suggested that recognition of the archetypal nature of the receipt of a gift is a helpful step in its integration. They referred to this process as the Archetype of Transcendent Integration (p. 48).

*Shadow Aspects of Wilderness Rites of Passage*

A shadow side of modern wilderness rites of passage appears in cultural appropriation (e.g., Aldred, 2000; Gray, 2002), spiritual consumerism (e.g., Aldred, 2000; Leonard, 1992; Trungpa, 1987), and psychological distress (e.g., Hillman, 1996; Spezzano, 1992). Of cultural appropriation Aldred (2000) reminded her readers,

Many Native Americans have been offended by the mockery these bastardized versions make of their sacred ceremonies. Some of the incidents denounced as most offensive include Sun Dances held on Astroturf, sweats held on cruise ships with wine and cheese served, and sex orgies advertised as part of “traditional Cherokee ceremonies.” (p. 333)

Certainly, some wilderness rites of passage providers “bastardize” versions of the sacred vision quest ceremony of the Native Americans and other indigenous peoples. This study purposely adopts the title and uses the terminology of “modern wilderness rites of passage” in an effort carefully to distinguish the modern version of such rites. Although derived from the same collective unconscious human urge to connect with Nature and some deeper parts of one’s self as are those of native peoples, although adapted on some levels from the sacred vision quest ceremonies of the Native Americans and other indigenous peoples, the modern rites of passage quests must not be equated with their indigenous ritualized forebears.

It is not only the practitioner of such quests but the researcher of their significance for modern questers who must be sensitive to cultural appropriation vis a vis the manner and method in which ceremonies such as a wilderness rites of passage are researched and reported. Gray (2002) wrote,

There is a rich seam of criticism that is concerned with looking at the role [the researcher] has played in constructing that which it claims to describe. . . . This has been seen as an operation of power with the [researcher] fixing his or her gaze on different cultures and rendering them visible, through published work, for the gaze of his or her community of readers. In this process [researchers] tended to present groups as “other” and “exotic” emphasizing the difference between “them” (the primitive) and “us” (the civilized). (p. 18)

Therefore, in the practice of distinguishing between traditional vision quests and modern wilderness rites of passage, one must also use caution not to view or present the former as primitive and the latter as civilized.

Spiritual materialism arises as another potential shadow aspect of wilderness rites of passage quests. Participants in modern wilderness rites of passage quests may be tempted to expend money for “better,” more expensive quests or on some of the abundant literature about Native American ceremonies, symbols, and sacred objects. Of this shadow side of appropriating traditional rites for commercial profit Aldred wrote, “Euro-Americans professing to be medicine people have profited from publications and workshops. Mass quantities of products promoted as ‘Native American sacred objects’ have been successfully sold by white entrepreneurs to a largely non-Indian market” (p. 329). Another concern regarding this shadow aspect of spiritual materialism derives from the potential that some may undertake a wilderness rites of passage quest to inflate their egos. “Shamans and contemplative masters, East and West, have always said that special powers can inflate egotism, stimulate destructive tendencies, and lead us away from health, wholeness, and goodness” (Leonard, 1992, p. 86).

Of equal concern is the tendency of some modern Western people to believe they can buy spiritual enlightenment. Trungpa (1987) explained:

Generally, when we speak of freedom or liberation or spiritual understanding, we think that to attain these things we need do nothing at all, that someone else will take care of us. We tend to think that all we have to do is make a commitment to the organization, pay our initiation fee, sign the resister and then follow the instruction given us. (p. 77)

Some participants in modern wilderness rites of passage quests may approach the quest as a contract: If one endures the rigors of the quest, one will receive psycho-spiritual transformation and will then be “done” with her quest for spiritual understanding. Obviously, such is not the case. No one except the quester herself has the obligation or the power to instigate psycho-spiritual transformation. The modern wilderness rites of passage structure provides a cocoon, and possibly a catalyst, for such change, but, ultimately, only the quester can cause, recognize, experience, and integrate any psycho-spiritual change.

Another potential shadow of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest may be the tendency to turn it into a psychological clinic. As quoted above, Grimes (2000) wrote: “I reject the sexism and cultural imperialism of the heroic model propounded by Campbell and find the Jungian tendency toward purely interiorized initiations precious and disembodied” (p. 144). A hero’s journey model of a modern quest may be too formulaic and the discussion of projected unconscious or collective unconscious material onto objects of nature as a path to self-discovery too Jungian.

Perhaps the most significant of all of the potential shadow consequences of participating in a modern wilderness rites of passage quest arises from the possibility that the quester will be presented with an opportunity to integrate some “other” aspect of himself, and that he will recognize the opportunity but fail to take it. Hillman (1996) warned,

In the acorn [his metaphor for a discovered life’s purpose] lies not only the completion of life before it is lived but the dissatisfied frustration of unlived life. The acorn sees, it knows, it urges—but what can it do? This discrepancy between seed and tree . . . packs the acorn with the fury of incapacity, of reach without grasp; the acorn is like a tiny child empurpled with rage because it cannot do what it imagines. (p. 284)

When a quester encounters self-realization and undertakes the responsibility to which Hillman (1996) alluded above, she realizes that it is she alone who can implement the actualization of the discovery. Of this awesome responsibility Spezzano (1992) wrote,

Others, either through self-realization or therapy, come to see that they're very much more alone in the world than they had imagined, and that no one is watching anymore. When this breakthrough happens, there can be a sense of loss that the audience is gone and you're alone on the stage—but there's also a sense of relief. (p. 87)

Paradoxically, the realization of how alone one is can be a shadow side of the experience of how interconnected everything and everyone is.

### *Psycho-Spiritual Transformation*

For purposes of this study psycho-spiritual transformation is defined as that which affected the deep part of one's self and led to greater authenticity, serenity, and meaning in life (Coburn, 2006, p. 14). Such a fundamental effect could be viewed as progression from one stage of development to another in a model such as those of Wilber (Brown, D., Engler, J., & Wilber, K., 1987; Wilber, 2000), Plotkin (2008) (described above), Washburn (1999), or Ruumet (1997, 2006).

Wilber performed substantial research across the literature and concluded that several philosophies demonstrate nine stages of human development: (a) sensoriphysical—matter, sensation and perception, typically the first 18 months of human development; (b) phantasmic-emotional—emotional and sexual preconception development, typically from 1 to 3 years old; (c) rep-mind, or representational mind—preoperative development in two sub-stages, symbols and concepts, typically 2 to 4 years old and 4 to 7 years old, respectively; (d) rule/role mind or concrete operational thinking (conop)—ability to take the role of others and perform rule operations, typically 7 to 10 years old; (e) formal-reflexive or formal operational thinking (formop)—self-reflexive and introspective and logical thinking, typically 11 to 21 years old; (f)

vision-logic—networks of relationships, panoramic logic or vision, if at all, between 21 and 28 years old; (g) psychic—the beginning of the transpersonal development, if at all, 28-35 years old; (h) subtle—transcendent insight and absorption, if at all, 35 to 42 years old; and (i) causal—the unmanifest source of all other stages, if at all, 42 to 49 years old. Stages one through three Wilber referred to as pre-personal development; stages four, five, and six as personal developmental stages; and stages seven through nine as transpersonal stages. Beyond and encompassing all these stages is the nondual stage (Brown, D., et al., 1987, pp. 80-133). Since this study deals with the spiritual aspect of psychological development, the shifts of interest in Wilberian terms would involve shifts in stages of transpersonal development, the last three stages of his model.

A stage of development attains a stable structure that it maintains over a period of time. Once one has attained a stage of development, that stage remains accessible to him/her even after further development occurs and a “higher” stage has been attained. This concept implies that lower stages integrate into higher ones, or that the lower stages nest into the higher ones. Hence, Wilber referred to the stages of development as the “Great Nest of Being” (2000, p. 5).

Wilber (2000) theorized that several developmental lines exist, each with its own stages. Among these lines are successions he described as different lines of selves that develop differently in each of the different states of consciousness. A Frontal or Ego self develops through the various stages in the gross or physical state of consciousness and usually peaks at the centaur or vision logic stage; a Deeper Psychic self or Soul that develops in the subtle state realm and is present in early development then fades as the Frontal self develops and reappears in postformop stages; and the Witness or Self, which is also apparent in early stages as the source

of the pre/post fallacy, ultimately fades and reappears in later stages of development (pp. 115-128). Washburn (1998) vigorously disagrees that Wilber's pre/post fallacy exists.

Wilber (2000, pp. 123-127) and Aurobindo (Dalal, 2001, pp. 206-249) agreed that at least three states of consciousness exist in everyday experience and that a fourth state, although less accessible, exists. The three are the waking or gross state, the dream or subtle state, and the deep dreamless sleep or causal state. The fourth state is nonduality. A state exists as a temporary or transitory condition. A human typically remains awake for a few hours each day dealing with the physical (gross) reality s/he encounters. At night that human usually sleeps; during a part of that sleep she will dream and enter the subtle state of consciousness. Therein humans deal with a reality different entirely from the physical or gross reality. One accesses subtle reality's higher levels in other natural ways such as using active imagination and shamanic journeying. Finally, the human ceases to dream while sleeping, and instead enters into another reality, the causal, and basks in a bliss that defies description in the other realities. Again, access to the higher levels of this reality requires spiritual practices such as meditation (Vaughan, 1995, pp. 253-288). A distinction between states of consciousness and stages of development is that states are transitory and stages are permanent. Wilber (2000) further divided states into the natural states of consciousness (described above) and altered states of consciousness. Drugs, near-death experiences, meditative practices, or "peak experiences" may induce altered states.

As expressed in Wilber's terms, this study focuses on the psycho-spiritual transformation of the Witness or Self. Sri Aurobindo taught that it is unlikely that one can advance to transpersonal stages without attaining the ability to access the soul through the subtle state of consciousness or causal state of consciousness (Dalal, 2001). As described above, modern wilderness rites of passage provide opportunities for subtle and causal states of consciousness

and, therefore, opportunities to progress to transpersonal stages of development, or, in other words, psycho-spiritual transformation.

Washburn's (1999) model involved the process of developing the true Self, a process Jung (1968) referred to as individuation. His model described the Dynamic Ground, a profound connection to the deep psyche, that all humans possess at birth. As culture and other developmental forces impact the individual, her energy focuses away from the Dynamic Ground and toward the world outside. Consequently, a new or separate self emerges that is segregated from the deep psychic energy of the Dynamic Ground.

Washburn noted that a child first undergoes a primal alienation, a termination of the symbiotic union with the Great Mother, in order to develop an independent life. The child thereafter begins the process of segregating his new self from the Dynamic Ground. Such a developmental process continues a personal integration quest until midlife when, as Washburn (1999) believed, an opportunity may arise for the developmental energy to perhaps again turn inward. Washburn (1995) wrote that individuals reach a point of development, as do societies, at which they can become fixated. He theorized that the prevalent narcissism in today's modern society results from the developmental fixation at the ego stage.

Whether one's narcissistic difficulties stem from insufficient mirroring and nurturing in early childhood . . . or whether they emerge at midlife as a consequence of disillusionment in the identity project, the result is that a person becomes excessively self-centered and needy of being the center of other people's attentions. (Washburn, 1995, p. 115)

Washburn (1999) identified midlife as the opportunity for transformation in the modern human to a stage beyond the fixated small self to a new level of psycho-spiritual development. As Plotkin (2008) and Campbell (1972) point out, earlier humans, or non-modernized indigenous peoples, used to experience this opportunity for transformation in the passage from adolescence

to adulthood. During this “midlife crisis,” an individual may focus her energy to more spiritual matters. The first phase of the small self’s, or the ego’s, journey downward and inward (as opposed to the upward and outward cultural focus of modern society) is “a dark odyssey into the unconscious” (p. 6). Washburn referred to this process as “the regression in the service of transcendence” (p. 6). The process provides the self with the opportunity to reconnect with the Dynamic Ground, which achievement, with proper integration, allows the individual to grow beyond the fixated small self toward the Self (Coburn, 2006).

This study focuses on exactly this transition that Washburn (1999) identified. Most modern questers feel called to quest by some “crisis” that the small self has encountered. By literally going out into the wilderness, into the dark on an unusual odyssey, a quester enters Washburn’s “dark odyssey into the unconscious.” He often encounters there an opportunity to reconnect with the Dynamic Ground and integrate that lost part of his Self, in a process of psycho-spiritual transformation that is observed to be in the “service of transcendence.”

Ruumet’s (1997, 2006) model has similarities to Washburn’s (1999) in that both models involve “regression in the service or transcendence” (p. 6); however, her model outlined a process of development in a helical or spiraling form, rather than in a linear form. She described the developmental process as the process of addressing the “interdependence of the psychological, physical, and spiritual dimensions of our existence” (Ruumet, 1997, p. 6). Ruumet’s model, obviously influenced by shamanic teachings, consists of seven developmental centers that correspond to the chakras. She explained that her use of the term *centers* rather than *chakras* was chosen “in order to focus on the developmental task and characteristics symbolically related to the various energies rather than the energies themselves” (2006, pp. 18-19). The lower three centers of development represent the stages of personal or egoic

development, including establishing survival (associated with the root chakra), kinship (associated with the sacral chakra), and personal power (associated with the solar plexus chakra). Ruumet described the principal goals of each center, including the skills to be cultivated, healthy and unhealthy manifestations, the nature of spirituality, and the basis for connecting. Interesting for its relationship to this study is the fact that Ruumet considered as significant an individual's development beyond this *egoic/power center*—the level of the “achieving self” (level three associated with the third, the solar plexus chakra)—and movement toward the *aloha center*, the “loving self” (level four associated with the fourth, the heart chakra) (Ruumet, 1997, p. 9). Ruumet (1997) stated that important psycho-spiritual transformation occurs at this *aloha center*. The individual learns to focus less on individual achievement, recognition, and kinship, which Ruumet labeled “need and greed,” and to focus more on empathy, kindness, and extending kinship to all humanity. She defined this development of devotion and service to others as a form of spirituality. Hence, the movement from Ruumet's center three to center four is a description of a psycho-spiritual transformation (Coburn, 2006). Ruumet (2006) wrote, of this transformation,

I believe this to be a major individual and collective task for us all during this century. Perhaps such an integral experience of our immanent and transcendent nature as an inseparable whole can save us from the self-centered and short-sighted ignorance that drives our ravaging of the earth and each other. (p. 112)

Psycho-spiritual transformation of each individual is seen by Ruumet as a worthy goal both for the individual and for society generally.

Interestingly, Ruumet's (1997, 2006) model mirrors life, in that it is helical. As an individual enters the later stages of development, she often finds herself returning to the unresolved work of earlier stages. In a manner similar to that of Washburn's (1999) “regression in the service of transcendence” (p. 6), she may return to the survival center (or root chakra) and

the kinship center (or sacral chakra). In the process of this “revisit,” opportunities to re-experience and resolve issues associated with an earlier level of development present themselves.

Psycho-spiritual transformation involves the development of human potential. As described above, the recognition and integration of “other” aspects of one’s self constitute a method of bringing about such transformations (e.g., d’Aquili & Newberg, 2000; Hillman, 1975; Johnson, 1986; Jung, 1968; Ruumet, 2006; Washburn, 1999; Wilber, 2000). Maslow (1968) described the human potential of self-actualized individuals:

They attempt to grow to perfection and to develop more and more fully in their own style. The motivation of ordinary men [*sic*] is a striving for the basic need gratifications that they lack. But self-actualizing people in fact lack none of these gratifications; and yet they have impulses. They work, they try, and they are ambitious, even though in an unusual sense. For them motivation is just character growth, character expression, maturation, and development; in a word self-actualization. Could these self-actualizing people be more human, more revealing of the original nature of the species, closer to the species type in the taxonomical sense? Ought a biological species to be judged by its crippled, warped, only partially developed specimens, or by examples that have been overdomesticated, caged, and trained? (p. 159)

Maslow pointed out that the self-actualized or psycho-spiritually developed human more truly represents the human species than do those humans who have not experienced self-actualization.

Johnson (2008) wrote about the inner gold that exists in each individual, the self-actualized, psycho-spiritually developed part of each true human that is often difficult to recognize.

Inner gold is the highest value in the human psyche. It is our soul, the Self, the innermost part of our being. It is us [*sic*] at our best, our twenty-four-karat gift to ourselves. Everyone has inner gold. It isn’t created, but it does have to be discovered. When I speak about gold this way, I am also speaking about God (p. 3).

Johnson wrote on to explain that it is sometimes difficult to recognize one’s gold and, once recognized, to carry it. He explained, “One reason we hesitate to carry our own gold is that it is dangerously close to God. Our gold has Godlike characteristics and it is difficult to bear the

weight of it” (p. 19). George Leonard (1992) took a very scientific approach to this question of *inner gold* and concluded that “there are strong reasons to believe that all of us can experience exceptional aliveness, and that such aliveness can be cultivated” (p. 86). Many other authors, indeed many religions and movements, have recognized the existence of the “inner gold” within humankind (e.g., Coelho, 1993; Davis, 1999; Gyatso, 1995; Hillman, 1975, 1996; Trungpa, 1984). In fact, such a concept forms the core of transpersonal psychology as envisioned by James (1902/1958), Maslow (1968, 1971), and Walsh and Vaughan (1993).

Viktor Frankl (1939/1963) wrote—after witnessing human beings, including himself, forced to suffer unimaginably at the hands of other human beings—that “one of the main features of human existence is the capacity to rise above such conditions and transcend them. In the same manner, man ultimately transcends himself; a human being is a self-transcending being” (p. 207). Participants in modern wilderness rites of passage have the opportunity to experience psycho-spiritual transformation by progressing to the highest levels of transpersonal stages, including that of self-transcendence, and to the discovery of their “inner gold.”

### *Summary*

A modern wilderness rites of passage quest, as a guided adventure into the wilderness for several days, some of them spent alone and fasting, provides the quester with an opportunity to experience archetypal encounters. This chapter notes that Jung (1968) suggested that archetypal experiences, encounters with collective unconscious materials, are contained in dreams, active imagination, and altered states of consciousness. This study suggests the expansion of the Jungian view of collective unconscious to include the contributions of non-human entities to its material. It also augments the methods of encountering the archetypal material of this expanded view of the material of the collective unconscious to embrace the possibility that such material

may be encountered in consciousness by means considered mystical, or not explainable by current scientific understandings. A review of the available literature on modern wilderness rites of passage quests finds that questers frequently report opportunities for archetypal experiences encountered in dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, and mystical circumstances during their wilderness rites of passage quests. Given the intense opportunity for archetypal encounters during a wilderness rites of passage quest, it seems likely that many such encounters must occur. In fact, several examples of archetypal encounters are examined in this literature review: hero's journey, calling, Nature as a "fabulous force," new name, trials, gifts, and visions. The archetypal nature of each of these examples has been established and empirical evidence of questers experiencing archetypal encounters represented by each of these examples has been presented. The literature demonstrates a need for a study directly linking the actual experience of archetypal encounters to participation in a modern wilderness rites of passage quest.

## Chapter 3: Methods

### *Introduction*

I employ a research design of Intuitive Inquiry, a qualitative research method developed by Anderson (1998, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008). In this chapter I present the questions I study, explore the elements of Intuitive Inquiry, and explain how I use intuitive explorations to deploy the Intuitive Inquiry method in the study. Furthermore, I relate some of the rationale for selecting Intuitive Inquiry as the study's method, the significance of the study, and my processes with the first cycles of Intuitive Inquiry, together with the significant impact of those processes on me.

### *Research Questions*

This study explores the lived experiences of individuals who participated in modern wilderness rites of passage quests, experienced encounters during those rites that invited major transformations in their lives, and attempted to integrate those encounters into their lives. It asks, What is the nature of the lived experience of individuals who believe that they experienced an encounter on a modern wilderness rites of passage quest that has propelled them into psycho-spiritual transformation? What was the nature of the lived experience for each individual? What was going on in the individual's life at the time, and, over time, how did the experience propel the individual toward psycho-spiritual transformation in her or his life?

### *Intuitive Inquiry*

This study employs the Intuitive Inquiry method of qualitative research. The Intuitive Inquiry has evolved since its debut 10 years ago. Anderson (2008) describes the evolution of the research method of Intuitive Inquiry:

My first version of intuitive inquiry incorporated intuitive and compassionate ways of knowing in the selection of a research topic, data analysis, and presentation of findings in

what might be described as an in-depth qualitative research method (Anderson, 1998). Later, I developed a hermeneutical process composed of iterative cycles of interpretation to give intuitive inquiry a “soft” structure that invites both freedom of expression and intellectual thoroughness throughout the method (Anderson, 2000). The version of intuitive inquiry presented in this chapter and elsewhere (Anderson 2004a, 2004b, Esbojorn-Hargens & Anderson, 2005) represents a further integration of these resources and my experience in supervising studies using intuitive inquiry over the past ten years. (p. 2)

Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) provide a relevant context about hermeneutics: “The term *hermeneutics* originally referred to the discipline of interpreting ancient texts, but it has been extended to denote the entire phenomenon of interpretation, understood as *enactment* or *bringing forth* of meaning from a background of understanding” (p. 149). Intuitive Inquiry expands the hermeneutical research approach into a broader method that incorporates transpersonal ways of knowing and communicating.

Intuitive Inquiry (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008) engages the topic of a study with a hermeneutical research method that is informed by the researcher’s experience with the topic, resulting in a unique marriage of intuition and intellectual precision. Intuitive research typically involves topics that are of particular interest to the researcher and have the power to provide transpersonal transformation to both the participants and the researcher. In the process of intuitive inquiry, at least five successive, sometimes iterative, cycles of interpretation unfold: “Cycle 1, *Clarifying and Engaging the Research Topic*; Cycle 2, *Developing the Preliminary Lenses*; Cycle 3, *Collecting Data and Preparing Summary Reports*; Cycle 4, *Transforming and Refining Lenses*; and Cycle 5, *Integration of Findings and Literature Review*” (Anderson, 2008, pp. 8-29). Cycles 1 and 2 represent the “forward arc” of hermeneutical research, in which the topic and questions are clarified. Cycles 3, 4, and 5 represent the “return arc” in a process described as “transforming pre-understanding via the understanding of others” (Anderson, 2008, p. 9). These cycles are detailed below.

“Intuitive Inquiry is *not* for every researcher or every topic” (Anderson, 2008, p. 3). It is a research model that recognizes research design as an unfolding process. It recognizes, in a refreshingly honest way, the intersubjectivity of the topic, researcher, participants, and likely audience in the research process. Intuitive Inquiry research requires the researcher to investigate thoroughly the topic as a phenomenon of human experience. Additionally, it encourages creative and honest communication: “Intuitive inquirers are expected to write compassionately and vividly, bringing emotional honesty to the fore” (Anderson, 2008, p. 29).

Intuitive Inquiry, as its name implies, relies heavily on intuition as a method of research exploration. Anderson (2008) cited Bastick’s (1982) list of nine common attributes of intuitive experiences:

1. Confidence in the intuitive process itself
2. A sense of certainty about the insights derived
3. Sudden or immediate appearance in awareness
4. Accompanying feelings of wonder or numinosity
5. Gestalt and non-rational character of the insights derived
6. Accompanying feelings of empathy
7. A sense of the ineffability of the intuitive experience
8. Intrinsic relationship of intuition to creativity
9. A sense that insights derived may prove to be incorrect. (p. 4)

Anderson (2008) proceeded to outline five types of intuition: (a) unconscious, symbolic, and imaginal processes; (b) psychic or parapsychological experiences; (c) sensory modes of intuition; (d) emphatic identification; and (e) through our wounds. Recognizing and trusting intuition requires a level of courage and transpersonal maturity that is not for the faint of heart. Literally

speaking, Intuitive Inquiry is a work demanding not only engagement of the mind, but also the open and honest engagement of the heart.

Another basic element of the Intuitive Inquiry research method is the hermeneutical research process (Anderson, 2008). Varela et al. (1991) maintained that a hermeneutic process requires the embodiment of the research process. It is an inquiry that takes place in iterative cycles of interpretation, a process that involves a forward and return arc that comprises a circle. “Like hermeneutics in general, the intuitive inquirer [so] often is chasing a moving target that she is likely to wonder if she is or the data are changing before her eyes” (Anderson, 2008, p. 3). Hermeneutical research incorporates perspectives of embodiment and cultural embeddedness. It recognizes that honest research is inseparable from our bodies, our psyches, our language, and our history.

Intuitive Inquiry possesses a phenomenological element but would not be considered a phenomenological method of inquiry. In that phenomenological observation is a way to observe what is present without adding judgments or commentary, it does contribute to Intuitive Inquiry. It requires one to suspend the natural tendency to compare what is being observed with external standards or expectations. This way of observing the data, without filters—either personal or cultural—permits an intuitive appreciation of the data’s qualities in the present moment (Hanna, 1993). Anderson suggested that the researcher reflect upon the world (external and internal) as it actually exists. “Intuitive Inquiry affirms a world reality in flux and mutable and, therefore, challenges conventional notions of a static worldview that is separate and distinguishable from the knower, the lover” (Anderson, 2008, p. 3).

Anderson (2000) emphasizes the importance of the quality of compassion when conducting Intuitive Inquiry. “To know a phenomenon of experience or of nature, we must love

it and become its friend. It is as though what is observed gently yields itself to our knowing. There is no object, no subject, and no intrusion” (p. 31). Intuitive Inquiry recognizes that the researcher, through her values and compassion for the topic, cannot, in fact, be separate from her research.

“Intuitive Inquiry is a hermeneutical research process requiring at least five iterative cycles of interpretation” (Anderson, 2008, p. 9).

Cycle 1 of Intuitive Inquiry is a part of the forward arc of the hermeneutical circle described above; it is the point of entry into the circle. The researcher is encouraged to select a topic for which he has not only scholarly interest but also interests and passions uniquely his (Anderson, 2008). To clarify and refine his topic during Cycle 1, the researcher chooses a text or image (or it chooses him) “that repeatedly attracts or claims his attention and relates in a general—and sometimes initially ambiguous way—to his research interests” (pp. 10-11) and engages in dialogue with it. “The text for engagement and reflection itself may be many things and not just words on a page in the conventional sense” (Anderson, 2004, p. 6). Once the text or object (broadly defined) is identified, the researcher begins Cycle 1 interpretation. Anderson (2008) suggested that the researcher engage the text daily for at least 20 minutes of reading, listening, or viewing it. The researcher is encouraged to record his “thoughts, ideas, daydreams, conversations, impressions, visions, and intuitions” (p. 13) at this point in the cycle. “This process of engagement with the art object or text should be continued until the creative tension between the intuitive researcher and the text feels resolved or complete” (pp. 13-14).

Cycle 2 of Intuitive Inquiry is a continuation of the forward arc of the hermeneutic cycle begun in Cycle 1. In this cycle, the researcher articulates in her words her “personal values, assumptions, and understanding of the research topic as preliminary lenses *prior* to data

gathering” (Anderson, 2008, p. 15). These preliminary lenses represent the context in which the research was conducted. The preliminary lenses are ascertained in a dialogue with texts similar to the dialogue associated with Cycle 1. Anderson (2008) described this Cycle 2 dialogue as a three-step process: (a) selecting from among several empirical sources a unique set of texts directly related to the topic of research; (b) selecting from among the usual literature and research on the topic a set of unique texts for the researcher’s Cycle 2 imaginal dialogue, and, (c) based on the imaginal dialogue with these texts selected in (a) and (b) above, preparing a list of preliminary Cycle 2 lenses that represent her understanding of the topic prior to the collection of data. By virtue of the fact that it involves identifying and communicating preliminary lenses, “the method is boldly hermeneutical in nature. Specifically, lenses are articulated in order to track and record how they change and transform in the course of the study” (p. 18).

Cycle 3 of Intuitive Inquiry begins the return arc of the hermeneutical cycle. In the first two cycles of Intuitive Inquiry, the researcher focuses inward to discover his own perceptions of the topic and the lenses through which he views it. To the contrary, in Cycle 3, the researcher focuses on engaging the text of others. Anderson (2008) suggested that the researcher do this in four steps. First, the researcher identifies the best sources of data he can locate for the research topic. “While researchers may be tempted to choose data that are conveniently available, rarely does a study profit from this approach—far less the in-depth, intuitive processes invited by intuitive inquiry” (p. 19). Next, once the best sources of data are selected, the researcher develops the criteria that will be employed for the selection of data from among the sources identified in the first step.

Third, the researcher collects the data. “To date, most researchers using Intuitive Inquiry have collected original empirical data in the form of interviews or stories from contemporary

research participants who meet specific criteria as informants relevant to the topic of study” (p. 20). Finally, the researcher prepares the data in as descriptive a form as possible. Anderson instructed, “For descriptive presentation of data in Cycle 3, be creative” (p. 21). She then outlined several descriptive modes of presentation of data in Cycle 3 including written portraits (Moustakas, 1990); participant narrative stories; thematic content analysis, embodied writing; summary and inferential statistics without interpretation; systematic textual or statistical summaries; artistic representation of participant stories; participants’ creative expressions; summaries accompanied by quotes, poetry, embodied writing, art, and/or photography; and combinations of the above.

Cycle 4 of Intuitive Inquiry involves the researcher in the task of transforming and refining the preliminary lenses discovered in Cycle 2 in light of her engagement with data that has been gathered as outlined above in Cycle 3. By integrating the experiences of others gathered and presented in Cycle 3, the researcher expands and distills the content of her preliminary lenses. While the researcher collects his data in Cycle 3, he constantly reflects upon his preliminary lenses and notices how they change when confronted with the perspective of others’ experiences. Of this change between Cycle 2, preliminary lenses, and Cycle 4, transformed and refined lenses, Anderson (2008) wrote that

In Intuitive Inquiry, two-fold articulation of lenses in Cycle 2 and again in Cycle 4 mitigates against circularity, that is, reiterating what the research believed from the start. The degree of change between Cycle 2 and Cycle 4 lenses is in part a measure of the researcher’s willingness to be influenced by data and to modify his understanding of a topic. (p. 23)

In Cycle 4, the researcher performs a lens-by-lens comparison that enables him to evaluate the shift in his lenses and readily identify them for the reader. He must “provide a reader-friendly way to make substantive and subtle changes obvious to the reader in Cycle 4” (p. 23).

The intuitive style of the researcher shapes Cycle 4 of Intuitive Inquiry. The better one knows how her intuitive style works, the easier it is to encourage and nurture breakthrough insights described as “illuminating moments when the data begin to shape themselves in the eyes of the researcher” (Anderson, 2008, p. 24). This cycle provides the heart and soul, very literally, to the Intuitive Inquiry process. The researcher must proceed through the transformation and refinement of her preliminary lenses at the pace and with the insight that only true intuition can provide.

Cycle 5 of Intuitive Inquiry requires the intuitive researcher to reevaluate the literature review done prior to data collection in light of her findings from Cycles 3 and 4. She stands back from the entire research process and evaluates all aspects of the study anew. In effect, she circumscribes the hermeneutical forward and return arc of her study in a new hermeneutical circle. She must be honest in identifying what remains undiscovered or undisclosed, as well as concerning mistakes made, procedures and plans that did not work, apprehensions and puzzlements about the study, and the style of intuitive interpretation. In addition, in Cycle 5, the Intuitive Inquirer imagines possible new ways, based on her research, for humans to be in the world. With boldness unique to Intuitive Inquiry, the researcher projects a trajectory of human possibilities based on the data implicit in her study. Not only does Intuitive Inquiry hold transformative possibilities for the researcher, readily apparent from the change in lenses resulting from the insight gathered from the data of others, but also offers them for the participants; the readers of the study; and, because of the bold trajectory of possibilities, others who may never directly know of the study.

### *Rationale for Selection of Intuitive Inquiry Method*

As I mentioned in chapter 1 of this dissertation, my interest in wilderness rites of passage began about 14 years ago when I enacted a modern version of a wilderness rites of passage quest (Foster & Little, 1984; Plotkin, 2003). I heard the calling, which was a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder, to conduct this quest. I have come to believe that, for my own greater good, I unknowingly caused the events that led to this stressful calling (Wood, 2004). Hillman (1996) noted that the soul of an individual might feel so ignored by that individual that it will cause (or cause her to cause) events to awaken that individual to her soul's purpose. My soul knew I was a captive of my restricted thinking and that my soul would languish there if something did not happen; so, as a good soul, it caused something to happen. At the time, that something, the legal turmoil described in chapter 1 that resulted in my actual imprisonment, caused me a great deal of suffering; I see now that the suffering was a necessary element of the method my soul used to drag me out of the comfort of my habituated life (Wood, 2007b).

The fasting solo portion of the wilderness rites of passage quest scared my ego. Because I was alone in nature, my soul, a creation of Nature, felt at home and very alive (Abram, 1996, pp. 16-21). The din of my ego-chatter quieted, and, from somewhere deep inside of me, there surfaced the message: "Set your people free." As I continue to integrate this message these many years later, I have come to believe that the first level of meaning was to set my family and myself free from organized religion and Cartesian, capitalistic thinking. I now recognize that "my people" comprise more than my immediate family and me. Interestingly, the message evolves as I do. I currently seek to fulfill the message by guiding others to experiences of transformative encounters on wilderness rites of passage quests.

In addition, I came to realize, as I began this process of preparing for and proposing the topic of this study, that I have been driven to do so by some unfinished integration of my own wilderness rites of passage experience. The processes of Intuitive Inquiry require that I examine my relationship to the topic and my preliminary lenses regarding it. My experiences with those cycles have been deeply soulful encounters. I began a new journey with this research that related to further a healing of the wounds of which I wrote in chapter 1. I felt apprehension because I suspected it would involve picking at some old wounds that are buried but not healed. I also felt a bit like the archetypal Fool, mustering the transcendent courage to take the step into the mystical void.

I wonder why I recognized the encounter I experienced on my own wilderness rites of passage quest as so meaningful to me. What about that experience prompted me to re-evaluate my entire worldview, my religious-philosophical-psychological approach to living my life? Why did I come to recognize that I had to undergo the struggles I describe in chapter one to be prepared to receive this experience? What was it about the realms of my own unconscious and the materials of the collective unconscious and the mystical that made the experience so transformational for me? It seemed that this one moment in my life served as the tipping point between my preparatory past wounding experiences and a future of healthy soul engagement with living free in the world.

Intuition, along with dreams, active imagination, and altered states of consciousness (Jung, 1968) are the gateways into the internal realms of unconsciousness and the material of the collective unconscious and the mystical. I entered through those gateways to discover the answers to why an encounter on a wilderness rites of passage experience so affected me. Furthermore, it seems that I had to dismember myself to uncover whatever wound it is that

continues to call me to this work. Romanyshyn (2007) described in his book *The Wounded Researcher: Research With Soul in Mind* a research approach that, as the name suggests, involves the researcher's own relationship with the topic and a mindfulness of his own process as he progresses through a research project involving that topic. I could not undertake this work from a distance but, rather, as Romanyshyn suggests, I had to delve into it as Orpheus into the underworld. He outlined six moments of the process, which he called "six Orphic moments in research with soul in mind" (pp. 62-80): (a) being claimed by the work; (b) losing the work/mourning as invitation; (c) descending into the work/mourning as denial; (d) looking back at the work/mourning as separation; (e) dismemberment by the work/mourning as transformation; and (f) the Eurydician question/mourning as individuation. To these ends, I selected Intuitive Inquiry (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2006, 2008) as the research method for this study. As I describe below, my initial engagement with Intuitive Inquiry in Cycles 1 and 2 propelled me along the path of the six Orphic moments Romanyshyn outlined. Intuitive Inquiry's approach to the questions examined in this study provides a method for me as the researcher to engage deeply and soulfully with the essence of the transformative encounters of others and myself during our wilderness rites of passage experience. Intuitive Inquiry is uniquely qualified as a research method for the soulful engagement with, immersion in, and incubation of (Moustakas, 1990; Romanyshyn, 2007) this essence, buried, as it is, in the material of the unconscious, the collective unconscious, and the mystical.

### *Intuitive Explorations*

Intuitive Inquiry requires the conscious use and development of specific skills of intuitive exploration before, during, and after the research process. These explorations allow the engagement, immersion, and incubation—three processes described by Moustakas (1990)—that

help a researcher gain an understanding of his or her relationship with the research topic and data. Romanyshyn (2007), as discussed above, further suggests that the researcher's own relationship with the topic and a mindfulness of her own process provide intuitive insights as she progresses through a research project involving that topic. Below, I list several exploration methods I developed and used in this research study that allowed me soulful engagement, immersion, and incubation. These explorations include: (a) doing dream work, (b) undertaking shamanic journeying, (c) taking questions to Nature, (d) creating sacred space, (e) employing embodied writing, (f) engaging in Nature writing, (g) being alert to synchronicities, and (h) using creative expression. In the list below, I also provide more detail about these methods of exploration and how I engaged them in the three phases of this research project: (a) preparing for research and gathering data, (b) working with data, and (c) communicating the results (Braud & Anderson, 2002). Furthermore, in appendix L, I outline how I utilized the following explorations in each of these three phases.

*Doing dream work.* Dream work entails discussing and exploring dreams with an eye toward uncovering meaning to the dreamer that may be hidden in the symbolic language of the dream. Taylor (1992, 1998) suggests that unconscious and collective unconscious material surfaces in dreams; however, the material is in symbolic language that usually requires some work to understand. By engaging in discussions that involve relating the dream and allowing others to project carefully their own impression of the symbolic meanings ("if it were my dream, I might think that this symbol means . . .") the dreamer may discover some meaning that has significance to him.

I employed dream work to uncover meaning in my own dreams about my experience during a wilderness rites of passage quest and to ask the participants to engage in dream work

with me about significant dreams they had had about their quests. Additionally, I worked with my entire quest experience as if it were a dream to uncover symbolic meaning that may have otherwise escaped my understanding. Similarly, and for the same reasons, I worked with quest experiences of the participants as if they were dreams. Finally, I worked with my dreams throughout the five cycles of Intuitive Inquiry to explore meanings that emerged about my engagement of the topic, my lenses, my gathering of the data, my working with the data, and my re-assessment of the topic in consideration of the data I had collected.

*Shamanic journeying.* Journeying using the techniques handed down through eons of time by shamans provides a way to enter into the unconscious, collective unconscious, and mystical materials of the journeyers. The experiences of journeys are often symbolic and require some interpretation; the interpretation leads to new understandings about the objective of the journey. Gagan (1998), Harner (1980), Ingerman (1991), and Villoldo (2000, 2006) discuss shamanic journeying as an excellent method of encountering material within the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. I used this method of exploration to increase my understanding of my own experience. I invited participants who expressed that they feel comfortable journeying on their own to do so to increase their understandings, as well. I engaged in shamanic journeying to prepare for the interviews with the participants, to understand what they had related to me, and to understand my audience in reporting the results of the research.

*Taking questions to Nature.* Nature provides the laboratory in which humans can encounter their own inner landscapes and the mystical forces that prompt the psycho-spiritual transformations that comprise the focus of this study. I utilized the laboratory of nature for the engagement with, immersion in, and incubation of the material explored by this study. I took the topic questions to Nature as I attempted to understand my relationship to the topic in Cycle 1 and

as I endeavored to identify my preliminary lenses regarding the topic in Cycle 2. I encouraged the participants to spend some time alone in nature to refresh their memories of their wilderness rites of passage experiences before I interviewed them, as I also did. I took the data, once collected, to Nature and was sensitive to the information about the data I received there.

One reason to use the intuitive exploration tool of treating nature as a laboratory emerges from the fact that ego is a construct of humans, a human psychological process. Because the human ego is not an ontological entity independently occurring in nature, exposing it to nature does not reinforce its reality. The soul, or innate humanness, on the other hand, is a natural entity. In the experience of many modern wilderness rites of passage participants, when the ego is not around other humans, not around other human constructs, and has to go without instead of getting what it wants, it weakens. On the other hand, the soul gains strength in its natural environment. The thinking mind, the ego, becomes quiet, and the sensing soul becomes active. The soul, in this state, taps into the collective unconscious, “sees” archetypal images in its natural world, and, with the ego quieted or shut down, “perceives” the meaning of the images more readily (Davis, 2003; Foster & Little, 1989, 1992; Plotkin, 2003).

*Working in sacred space.* Anderson points out that “the five cycles of Intuitive Inquiry are themselves sacred rituals or ‘containers’ for transformative experiences, bounded and dynamic” (personal communication, November 3, 2007). Over several years, I have developed my own ceremonies to open, hold, and close sacred space. The concept of sacred space is meaningful to me; for example, I worked in sacred space to engage the topic of this study, to develop my understanding of my preliminary lenses with respect it, and to write the proposal for this study. I used working in sacred space as an intuitive exploration tool as I collected the data (creating sacred space for the interview with the participants), while working with the data in

sacred space, and while writing the report of the study in sacred space. The intuitive insight resulting from these efforts as processed in a designated sacred space may thus, be infused with symbolic significance considered by many people for generations of time to be numinous and sacred.

*Embodied writing* is defined by Anderson (2002) as a way to “bring the finely textured experiences of the human body to the art of writing” (p. 40). I have been trained as a lawyer and have worked for years drafting and reading business contracts. Attempting to communicate feelings, sensations, and emotions in addition to thoughts and concepts challenges my abilities and training. However, I can feel in my body when I am writing something that comes from my soul. I prepared this study by attempting to employ a writing style much different from my lawyerly, business, analytical writing. I have tried to give voice to my emotions regarding my own story and the empathetic emotions I experienced as I listened to and studied the stories of the participants. As I proceeded to assemble the summaries of the data and present the findings of the study, I also attempted to convey the soulful connection I felt with the deeply meaningful and transformative encounters the participants related about their modern wilderness rites of passage quests.

*Nature writing*, the major theme of Tredinnick’s (2005) book *The Land’s Wild Music: Encounters With Barry Lopez, Peter Matthiessen, Terry Tempest William, and James Galvin*, provides an extension of embodied writing. Tredinnick emphasized the need for one to incorporate the sense of connection an author has not only with her own body but also with the place or the country from which she writes. In describing a Nature writer, Tredinnick wrote, “What she is about is witness, of some kind, of a world larger than the merely human” (p. 13). He suggested the technique of following a few paragraphs written with a connection to self and

place with a paragraph or two written from a perspective of reflection on the meaning, significance, and symbolism of those few paragraphs. This study embraces the idea that both the human and the non-human world contribute, directly and psychologically, to the experience of a participant of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest. Such encounters are best explored by examining the nature of the lived experience (how did it feel) and thoughtfully reflecting on the experience. Tredinnick's Nature writing provides a tool that perfectly fits this exploration process. I have attempted to employ Tredinnick's example of how Nature writers write in writing this dissertation, particularly in relating my experiences with the data and my own story about my wilderness rites of passage quest.

*Being alert for synchronicities.* Jung (1973) wrote about the acausal connecting principle of synchronicity. He suggested that there is numinous and intuitive information available to those who remain alert to the amazing and inexplicable co-occurrence of seemingly unrelated events. During my wilderness rites of passage experience, synchronistic events occurred that were too meaningful to be attributed to mere chance. Others had similar experiences, and such events occurred as I worked together with the participants of this study. I asked the participants of this study to review the experiences of their own vision quests, as I, too, reviewed mine, with alertness for the meaningful synchronicities that may have occurred. Being alert to such occurrences and noting them provided further data for this study.

*Using creative expression to connect with unconscious material.* Jung (1964) wrote of the importance of art and symbols as a method of understanding the materials of an individual's unconscious and of the collective unconscious. I asked each participant to bring to the interview an image, song, piece of poetry, part of nature, or something else that expressed her experiences on the wilderness rites of passage quest and that might serve as a way to introduce herself to me.

Additionally, I showed several Tarot depictions of the Fool (including Coyote in Exhibit F) to the participants of this study, asked them to select a depiction that had meaning for them regarding their wilderness rites of passage experience, and discussed that meaning with them. This non-didactic, non-rational interaction provided another pathway for exploration of the topic of this study.

These explorations comprise the research tools I employed variously in each of the five Cycles of Intuitive Inquiry. The research design outlined below enumerates exactly how each of these skills has been employed.

### *Research Design*

Intuitive Inquiry (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2006, 2008) gives the study its design structure and organization.

*Cycle 1: Clarifying and engaging the research topic.* My immersion in the topic of wilderness rites of passage began prior to the commencement of this study. As I interpret my soul purpose, I believe it is to help set others free, as I am being set free by the experiences of a wilderness rites of passage quest. I pursue that purpose by continuing to incorporate my own wilderness rites of passage experience and by leading several groups of people on wilderness rites of passage quests. Thus, I informally began Cycle 1 of this Intuitive Inquiry by identifying my interests and my personal experience relating to the topic of transformation messages experienced during a wilderness rites of passage quest and then immersing myself into the topic. I also intuitively feel deeply within my body a sensation that resembles the feeling of fear but is a little higher in my body, signaling that, with this study, I have embarked on a hero's (or a fool's) journey that contributes to the fulfillment of my revealed soul purpose.

Anderson (2008) suggested that the Intuitive Inquiry researcher identify an image or text with which to dialogue in order to come to an intuitive understanding of and relationship with the chosen topic. I completed the first draft of the proposal for this dissertation believing that I had completed Cycle 1. I had developed my pre-understanding of the wilderness rites of passage quest: I knew that my own had affected me deeply, to the bone. I wondered why the experience had affected me so, and I had searched for the answers for years. I sought them in shamanism, Taoism, Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and transpersonal psychology. My search led me to ask what inside of me needed, and still needs, to be transformed. I re-enacted other wilderness rites of passage, trained to become a wilderness rites of passage guide, and guided others on wilderness rites of passage. What I had experienced profoundly shifted the way I am in the world: my soul whispering there just beneath the surface, reminding me of my life's purpose. I wanted to share it with others, partly from a sense of service and partly from a sense of validation. If others could experience what I experienced, then, perhaps, I had not succumbed to some insanity. I dialogued with a psychopomp of my shamanic journeys, Wild Man, an archetype of innate human wildness similar to the one described in Bly's (1990) *Iron John: A Book about Men*. I thought he was my Cycle 1 text.

The chair of my dissertation committee, after reading the first draft of my proposal for this study, suggested that I should spend some time just letting the topic settle on me. The other members of the committee agreed and recommended that I take the study's questions to Nature or "to the land." Because I am a driven student with experience in studying law and business, this approach was foreign to my way of approaching academia and I lapsed into a period of mild depression, dreamed the prison dreams that haunt me, and felt a constant churning in my body. During this hiatus, I had the following dream:

I was wandering in a mountain forest when I came out into the clear where I encountered an indistinct wild animal. It was sitting near the edge of a mountainside with a panoramic view of a large valley below watching the sun either rising or setting, I didn't know which. I sat down next to the animal and was trying to ascertain what kind of animal it was and if I was witnessing dawn or evenfall. Suddenly the animal turned to me and without malice told me I was a fool.

I shared my experience of darkness with my dissertation chair and told her I had discovered in my dream that I was a fool. She emailed to me the images of several Fools from the decks of Tarot Cards. As I examined the cards she had sent, I suddenly knew the kind of animal that I had encountered in my dream. It had known I was a fool because it was the Fool—Coyote. I share some of my dialogue and encounters with Coyote in Appendix J of this dissertation.

I recorded my own dreams while preparing the proposal for this study. The dreams have provided me insight into my relationship with the topic and with Coyote. Likewise, I engaged in shamanic journeys seeking information from the mystical, unconscious, and collective unconscious material encountered on such journeys. The records of these journeys also contributed to my understanding of the topic and my relationship to it. As I write in Appendix J, I took the topic to nature, the Teton Mountains, and received understanding there from Nature.

Additionally, I attempted to write of my own experiences from a place of embodiment and while keeping Tredinnick's Nature writing in mind. I was alert to synchronicities and artistic expressions of Coyote, or the Fool, that provided clues to my relationship to wilderness rites of passage, the journey of this study, and Coyote. Thus, I had clarified and engaged the research topic of this study through my engagement with Coyote—the archetypal Fool. I had reached the point that Anderson (2008) described as the moment when “the creative tension between the intuitive researcher and the text feels resolved or complete” (pp. 13-14).

*Cycle 2: Identifying the researcher's preliminary lenses.* Anderson (2006) wrote, "In Cycle 2, the researcher re-engages the research topic via dialectic activities intended to help the researcher discern the values and assumptions they bring to the topic from the start" (p. 16). For some time after I had the exceptional experience of my own wilderness rites of passage quest, I wondered about an explanation for it. Carl Jung (1963) inspired my academic research about wilderness rites of passage by the courageous recounting of his own archetypal encounters in *Dream, Vision, Reflections*. When I read Jung's account, the idea arose in my mind that I had experienced transformational encounters on my wilderness rites of passage quests. His book helped me in the integration of my own wilderness rites of passage experience. I wondered if other questers also experienced transformational messages and how they integrated them. I turned to Jung (1968) to discover that encounters with the materials of collective unconscious contained potential transformational messages and that the three ways one typically encounters the collective unconscious are through dreams, active imagination, and altered states of consciousness.

Jung's (1963, 1968) scholarship corroborated my own experience to a high degree; however, I began to experience the friction as illuminated by Anderson (2006). She described the process of identifying interpretive lenses of preunderstanding: "Identifying a unique value or assumption requires feedback in the way of contrast to provide sufficient creative 'friction' for a discernment process to take place in awareness" (p. 18). The friction seemed to exist in my own mind. I felt one thing intuitively and learned another didactically. The "things" I learned in these two ways possessed a great deal of similarity, but they did not overlie congruently.

This incongruity reminded me of that experienced by the brain scientist Jill Taylor (2008) and recounted in her book, *My Stroke Of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*. She

suffered a stroke that affected the left side of her brain and provided her the experience of relying principally on the right side of her brain until the left recovered. As for Taylor prestroke, most of my professional training and the information I rely upon every day in my work derives from my left brain. On the other hand, much of my intuition and insight derives from my right brain. After 3 days of fasting alone in the unfamiliar world of the wilderness during my wilderness rites of passage experience, my linear thinking brain, the left side of my brain, was slowed, or virtually stopped as was Jill Taylor's after her stroke); therefore, most of my encounters I experienced and remembered with the right side of my brain. As I read and learn from others about the effects of Nature on the human being, the psychological processes of projection and mirroring of unconscious material, the mythical structure of the wilderness rites of passage, the archetypal material of the collective unconscious, the psychophysiology of fasting and ritual, and the evidence of exceptional human experiences, I absorb this information in my left brain, and it all seems to make rational sense. Nevertheless, when I juxtapose this logical left-brain information on my own personal right brain wilderness rites of passage experience, pieces of right brain information are left sticking out around the edges. Not everything I experienced on my wilderness rites of passage quest can be explained by scholarship. Because of this fact, friction arises between personal experience and the knowledge imparted by others.

I identified 12 preliminary lenses in Cycle 2 and grouped them into four main categories through this frictional process of comparing my first-hand knowledge, my experience, with the knowledge of others. All 12 lenses have bases in both ways of knowing: intellectual—or learner-based—knowing and intuitive—or experienced-based—knowing. I include here short references to the literature I reviewed, so as to support my preliminary lenses as a preparation for Cycle 5, when I will return to the literature to examine the refinement of, transformation of, and addition

to these lenses as a result of the data gathered and examined in this study. I found scholastic support for all of my preliminary lenses. That is not to say that all psychologists profess to be Jungians or ecopsychologists but that some psychologists of good repute are Jungians or ecopsychologists. Some scholars embrace the existence of something mystical (Braud, 2003; Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000; Tart, 1997; White, 1997), and it has been my experience that, although not generally accepted by modern rational/scientific methods, the mystical exists in reality.

I noticed how fluid these 12 preliminary lenses seemed. They migrated and meandered as if seeking a place to settle down. Of course, one of the purposes of the Intuitive Inquiry lies in the identification of the researcher's shift in lenses. Using the explorations outlined above, I looked for clues as to the roots and identity of my preliminary lenses: in my dreams, in my journeys, in Nature, in my body's sensations, in my Nature writing, in synchronicities, and in artistic expressions. At the beginning of Cycle 3, I made the final assessment of my preliminary lenses, following the procedure that I related above to enable me to note how these lenses may change throughout the remaining cycles.

I present my 12 preliminary lenses in table 1 below as a list and subsequently describe the development of these through my two ways of knowing described above.

The first major grouping of my preliminary lenses is couched in these terms: Humans' perceptions, understanding, and awareness are informed by their experience and the context of those experiences.

Table 1

*Preliminary Lenses Listed by Grouping Statements*


---

Humans' perceptions, understanding, and awareness are informed by their experience and the context of those experiences.

---

1. Experiences such as time in wilderness, traumatic events, and interpersonal relationships, as well as the context of those experiences, such as cultural, educational, religious, and socio-economic background, inform humans' perceptions, understandings, and awareness.
- 

In reestablishing a natural relationship with Nature, modern Western humans may achieve psycho-spiritual transformation.

---

2. In Nature, all life is interconnected; separation from Nature is unnatural.
  3. Many modern Western humans have become separated from Nature.
  4. The unnatural separation of many modern Western humans from Nature may cause them to be fearful of it.
  5. Humans may achieve psycho-spiritual transformation by returning to their natural state of interconnection with Nature.
- 

Bringing to awareness the material of the individual or the collective unconscious provides opportunity for psycho-spiritual transformation.

- 
6. Greater self-awareness can be achieved through encounters with archetypes, patterns of the collective unconscious, that may occur in Nature, dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, or mystical experiences.
  7. Greater self-awareness can be achieved through humans reflecting their unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature.
  8. Other-than-human beings in the natural world can inform awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.
  9. Mystical experiences can inform awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.
  10. Integration of awareness achieved through archetypal encounters and through reflections of unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature can promote psycho-spiritual transformation.
- 

Wilderness rites of passages experiences provide opportunities for psycho-spiritual transformation.

---

11. Meaningful rituals, such as rites of passage, create a context and evoke a state of mind that opens humans to encounters with self-reflected and archetypal material.
12. Because a modern wilderness rites of passage quest creates an environment conducive to self-reflected and archetypal encounters, it affords its participant

the opportunity to integrate such encounters and potentially experience psycho-spiritual transformation.

---

The first preliminary lens was “Experiences such as time in wilderness, traumatic events, and interpersonal relationships, as well as the context of those experiences, such as cultural, educational, religious, and socio-economic background, inform humans’ perceptions, understandings, and awareness.” I cannot help but observe all of life through the eyes of a privileged, educated, White, male. As I listened to the experiences of the participants in this study I may have unconsciously brought some of my own background into the discussion. In reality, there is no separation or duality, I am, and the participant is, part of the same Whole; nevertheless, my modern Western mind often drifts toward duality. I realize, however, that to be cognizant of this lens is crucial to an effort to understand something as fundamentally human, across all cultures, as wilderness rites of passage. Because, like most humans, I project my own ways of knowing and my own experiences onto my fellow beings, I have an expectation that anyone who enacts a wilderness rites of passage quest has the opportunity to have a life-altering, psycho-spiritual experience similar to my own. This lens finds basis in the psychological theory of projection as discussed by Freud and his followers. My experience tells me that I often project my own perceptions. Awareness of this lens may have aided me in being careful not to project my own perceptions about wilderness rites of passage onto the study’s participants.

This concept of perception based on one’s development, background, and culture is referred to in psychology as *schema theory*. The theory is often attributed to Bartlett (1932, 1958), although Mandler (1984) and Rumelhart (1980) furthered its development, and psycholinguistics, such as in the work of Bransford and Franks (1971), contributed. Additionally,

schema theory has identified cultural differences as components of psychological development (Quinn & Holland, 1987).

The second major grouping of my preliminary lenses was based on the belief that, in reestablishing a natural relationship with Nature, modern Western humans may achieve psycho-spiritual transformation.

The second preliminary lens was “In Nature all life is interconnected; separation from Nature is unnatural.” The bases of this lens, as of all of the lenses discussed, are both personal experience and the experience of others as recorded in scholarly works. I have personally experienced interconnectedness with Nature. For example, on a recent hike in the Teton Mountains, I was overwhelmed by a euphoric feeling when I perceived that I was anchored in my “place” on and in the world. This experience reminds me of many such moments, since my early childhood on a farm, when I have connected to and been sustained by Nature.

The experience of others is recorded in the ancient mystical wisdom, such as that of the Australian Aborigines (Abram, 1996), the indigenous North Americans (Brown, T., 1993; Cajete, 1999; Neihardt, 1988; St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995), and Western African tribesmen (Somè, 1994), all of whom spoke of a “place” in Nature and in the world. Some modern writers also capture the essence of this human-Nature connection (Tredinnick, 2005). Several ecopsychology theorists have also written about the human/Nature connection and its healing benefits (Berry, 1999; Cajete, 1999; Cohen, 1997; Metzner, 1999; Roszak, 1992; Shepard, 1982; Swan, 1992), as have some scientists (Bartocci & Dein, 2005).

The third preliminary lens was “Many modern Western humans have become separated from Nature.” This lens derives from personal experience: I was raised on a farm in rural Utah and was blessed to be in constant contact with Nature. My schema, developed at an early age and

still an important motivator of mine, is that education is a vehicle of advancement in life. Therefore, I left the farm to attend school. The years in the city at a university did not allow me to maintain the connection with Nature I enjoyed on the farm. Additionally, by the nature of my educational pursuits (economic, law, business administration), I spent a lot of time “in my head.” I noticed that, when I finally did have an opportunity to spend time in the mountains, I felt very alienated. The world around me in the mountains differed so from the comfortable structured world of my subjects of study that I was uncomfortable there.

This lens also has roots in scholarship. For example, Shepard (1982) wrote that most modern human beings feel they are separated from Nature. Humans used to be at home in nature and the wilderness. They felt a deep connection with the Earth. Metzner (1995) also pointed out that the loss of that connection contributes in part to the psychopathology of modern humans. Fisher (2002) described one of the tasks of the relatively new field of ecopsychology as reconnecting humans to Nature (because many are physically, psychologically, and/or spiritually separated from Nature) by helping humans remember that they, too, are part of Nature.

The fourth preliminary lens was “The unnatural separation of many modern Western humans from Nature may cause them to be fearful of it.” This lens is rooted in my experience of fearing nature. On my first wilderness rites of passage experience, I noticed the panic that welled up in my throat as I left base camp and hiked to my power spot. I feared that I would become lost; that I would fall and hurt myself, with no one around to help me or hear my calls; that a large animal, such as a bear, would attack me; or that a small animal such as a scorpion or rattlesnake would bite me. I worried that I would get cold or wet or sunburned and be uncomfortable. After three days of fasting alone in the wilderness, I noticed that my ego quieted. I felt safe and connected with Nature.

This lens finds support in ecopsychology theory that purports to have accessed evidence that feelings of fear similar to those I experienced are common among modern humans. (Abram, 1996; Berry, 1999; Metzner, 1999; Roszak, 1992; Shepard, 1982).

The fifth preliminary lens was “Humans may achieve psycho-spiritual transformation by returning to their natural state of interconnection with Nature.” This lens is at the heart of this study and is based on my own psycho-spiritual transformation that was a result, at least in part, of my communion with Nature during my wilderness rites of passage quest.

The lens is supported by the research of Cohen (1997); Davis (1998); Hartig, et al. (1991); and Swan (1992) that demonstrated the healing attributes of returning to Nature. Greenway (1995) and Harper (1995) focused on the psychological benefits of interacting with Nature. Plotkin (2003) and Foster and Little (1992) wrote of the part Nature plays in the transformational potential of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest.

The third and final grouping of my lenses was founded in the belief that bringing to awareness the material of the individual or the collective unconsciousness provides opportunity for psycho-spiritual transformation.

The sixth preliminary lens was “Greater self-awareness can be achieved through encounters with archetypes, patterns of the collective unconscious, that may occur in Nature, dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, or mystical experiences.” This lens derives from many archetypal encounters that I have personally experienced in Nature. For example, once I dreamed of a coyote that later mystically appeared to me in the flesh (see the story I recount above). I actively imagined conversing with him and, in an altered state of consciousness at about 10,000 feet in the Teton Mountains, his message to me became clear. I believe that my remembering, writing down, and working with dreams; engaging in active

imagination exercises; seeking altered states of consciousness; and noting mystical experiences provide me opportunities to encounter material of the collective unconscious.

Jung (1968) provides strong support for this lens regarding the dreams, active imagination, and altered states. His theories are supported by writers about methodologies to engage dreams (Nelson, 2004; Taylor, 1992, 1998), active imagination (Gagan, 1998; Johnson, 1996; Villoldo, 2000, 2006), and altered states of consciousness (Groff, 1980/1994; Harner, 1980; Plotkin, 2003; Tart, 1990).

This lens also encompasses my belief that mystical sources also provide material for the collective unconscious, and that, therefore, one may encounter archetypal material that has a mystical source within the material of the collective unconscious. Furthermore, with this lens, I see that one may encounter archetypal material directly from a mystical source that is not necessarily a part of the material of the collective unconscious, for both of these lenses supply plenty of friction as I try to align the works and thoughts of Other with them. The best support I find for this effort in scholarship exists in the form of the study of exceptional human experiences (Braud, 2003; Cardeña, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000; Tart, 1997; White, 1997).

The seventh preliminary lens was “Greater self-awareness can be achieved through humans reflecting their unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature.” This lens exists for me because I have personally achieved some degree of greater awareness by recognizing my reflections on Nature. During my wilderness rites of passage, I engaged in a 3-day conversation with Great Tree, a weather-battered piñon, that taught me about resilience. I believed, although the tree added its own wisdom, that I had projected my own unconscious resilience onto the tree and witnessed it mirrored back to me.

Ecopsychology theory supports my conception of this lens: that Nature provides a mirror for the reflection of human unconscious projections (Davis, 1998, 2003; Plotkin, 2003). Jungian deep psychology theory and gestalt therapy also support the idea that mirrored reflection provides opportunity for insights and healing (Hillman, 1979; Hollis, 1998; Johnson, 1986; Jung, 1968).

The eighth preliminary lens was “Other-than-human beings in the natural world can inform awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.” My personal experience with learning from other-than-human beings contributes to the existence of this lens of mine. For instance, a coyote appeared on the roadside the day after I had dreamed of a coyote. The thoughts I received from looking into his eyes taught me I could learn from a coyote. This experience (as recounted above), is one of many that reminded me that not everything I experienced in the wilderness, or on my wilderness rites of passage quest, or in my life generally, could be explained by current psychological theory.

I find support for this lens in the ancient mystical wisdom and shamanism that accept the mystical contributions of other-than-human beings to the human experience (Brown, T., 1993; Grimes, 2000, 2006; Harner, 1980; Kalweit, 1988; Neihardt, 1988; Somè, 1994; St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995; Villoldo, 2000).

The ninth preliminary lens was “Mystical experiences can inform awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.” This lens was once strong in me, and then it faded as my belief that psychology, particularly Jungian psychology, offered explanation for many of the things I previously had believed to be mystical, for example, the tenet that an encounter with the material of the personal or collective unconscious may be experienced as an encounter with Other. More recently, however, I have had

experiences, such as the one described above with the coyote, that seem to defy psychological explanations and appear to me to be mystical. These experiences have had significant impacts on my awareness on a conscious level, and I believe they have also the capacity to impact me at the unconscious level. Therefore, as I began Cycle 3, this lens was once again strong in me.

I find support for my adherence to this lens in the study of exceptional human experiences that identifies many mystical contributions to the human experience (Braud, 2003; Cardeña, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000; Tart, 1997; White, 1997).

The 10th preliminary lens was “Integration of awareness achieved through archetypal encounters and through reflections of unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature can promote psycho-spiritual transformation.” My experiences provide the impetus for my development of this lens. An example is that, upon recognition of my participation in the archetypal role of Fool, I recognized the dynamic influence of various archetypes in my life, as well as in the lives of others. I believe that by understanding archetypal patterns in my life I better understand others and myself; such understanding leads me consciously to choose to live the life I was meant to live.

It is principally Jungian writers who provide the scholastic support I find for this lens (Campbell, 1972; Hillman, 1975; Hollis, 1998; Jung, 1964, 1968; Lowenthal, 2004; Pearson, 1986, 1991; Plotkin, 2003, 2008).

The third major grouping of my preliminary lenses was based on the belief that wilderness rites of passages experiences provide opportunities for psycho-spiritual transformation.

The 11th preliminary lens was “Meaningful rituals, such as rites of passage, create a context and evoke a state of mind that opens humans to encounters with self-reflected and

archetypal material.” The foundation for this lens is my experience of engaging in rituals that have assisted me in engaging the material of my personal and the collective unconscious. An example of my experience with such ritual occurred once during the shamanic ritual of journeying when I encountered and dialogued with Wild Man, a symbolic archetype of my unconscious and the collective unconscious. I have experienced such encounters many times in the process of participating in shamanic ceremonies.

Additional support for this lens derives from ancient mystical wisdom and shamanic practices that hold that such rituals and ceremonies create altered states of consciousness and that, in such states, humans are likely to receive information from sources other than their conscious minds, from mystical sources (Brown, T., 1993; Eliade, 1958, 1965; Harner, 1980; Kalweit, 1988; Villoldo, 2000). As stated above, one of my lenses perceives that mystical sources contribute to the collective unconsciousness of humans. When one taps into a mystical source, it may be a direct connection or a connection through the mystical material of the human collective unconscious. I did not encounter any “thoughts of others” directly supporting this aspect of this lens. However, neuropsychology supports the view that ritual may induce altered states of consciousness (d’Aquili & Newberg, 2000; Newberg, et al., 2001), and modern ritual theory supports the view that ritual may have a powerful impact upon the participants (Grimes, 2000, 2006; Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1960).

The 12th preliminary lens was “Because a modern wilderness rites of passage quest creates an environment conducive to self-reflected and archetypal encounters, it affords its participant the opportunity to integrate such encounters and potentially to experience psycho-spiritual transformation.” On a modern-day wilderness rites of passage quest, I received a message from my soul to set my people free. This transformational message suffused my life and

led me to propose this study. Based on this experience, I fervently embrace the lens that a modern wilderness rites of passage quest provides an opportunity for modern humans to participate in a meaningful rites of passage quest that can have a significant impact on their lives.

The perception of this lens is supported by modern wilderness rites of passage and ritual theory (Campbell, 1968; Davis, 2003; Grimes, 2000, 2006; Foster & Little, 1992; Plotkin, 2003; Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1960) and by ancient tribal custom, wisdom, and mythology (Brown, T., 1993; Harner, 1980; Kalweit, 1988; Neihardt, 1988; Somè, 1994; St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995; Villoldo, 2000).

*Cycle 3: Data collecting and summary reports.* Anderson (2008) wrote,

In Cycle 3, the researcher (a) identifies the best source(s) of data for the research topic, (b) develops criteria for the selection of data from among these sources, (c) collects the data, and (d) then prepares summary reports in as descriptive a manner as possible. (p. 23)

The best sources of data for this study are individuals who have experienced potentially transformational encounters during wilderness rites of passage quests. I solicited the participants by contacting several modern providers of wilderness rites of passage and asking for permission to distribute a letter among their previous clients in order to recruit participants in this study. Because of ethical problems with their providing me the names, I asked them to send an invitation (Appendix A) to their previous questers to contact me if interested in participating in the study. I selected 12 participants in this manner. I had planned to attempt to select participants whom I could conveniently visit; however, I had to travel from Utah to Washington, Oregon, Arizona, and Colorado to accomplish the data collection for this study.

The criteria for selecting the data from among the participants are as follows. The participants were partially self-selected, that is, they became those who responded to the letter of invitation (Appendix A). Those interested in the study had a transformational wilderness rites of

passage experience and expressed some curiosity about the experience by volunteering to participate in the study. The inclusion factors, therefore, were constituted of previous wilderness rites of passage experienced by potential participants who were curious about their experiences and were willing to participate in a study about them. A significant part of the selection process was based on a review of the stories the potential participants included in their responses to the invitation to participate in the interviews: I included those who I believed had encountered occurrences during their wilderness rites of passage experience that provided them with experiences that propelled them to make psycho-spiritual transformations in their lives.

I also ascertained whether the potential participants were comfortable working in sacred space and participating in ceremony during the telling of their wilderness rites of passage stories. The age group I included were at least 30 years old, because their experience, like mine, came at a time of mid-life transitions. Finally, my intuition as to whether the potential participant was someone with whom I could communicate and relate in a deep and meaningful way about a topic that is very meaningful to me was a significant inclusion factor.

I did not exclude potential participants who had either too recently or too long ago participated in their wilderness rites of passage quests. I was concerned, however, about too recent an experience because of my lens that it takes some time for the meaning of a wilderness rites of passage quest to incubate in the quester. I was also concerned about too old an experience because memories may have been too faded, except in particularly impactful cases. Those who expressed, either verbally or by nonverbal clues, that they were uncomfortable working in sacred space or participating in ritual were excluded. Those who, although they may have enjoyed their wilderness rites of passage experiences, did not believe that any lasting impact had resulted from the experience were excluded. Other exclusion factors included practical time constraints.

Significantly, exclusion factors also included my intuition that a prospective participant would not be someone with whom I could relate at the level necessary to gather information at the sacred level of the collective unconscious.

I assessed the factors of exclusion/inclusion based on a review of the information sent to me by potential participants who responded to the invitation to participate until I had selected 12 qualifying participants. As already mentioned, I relied heavily on intuition to aid with the inclusion/exclusion criteria. I used the Intuitive Inquiry explorations outlined above—my dreams, my journeys, communications in Nature, my body’s sensations, synchronicities, and artistic expressions—to include or exclude potential participants. I then asked each participant to complete an informed consent questionnaire (appendix B) and a demographic questionnaire (appendix D). Through an intuitive process of mine, described below, each participant was given a pseudonym that was used to protect confidentiality and facilitate processing of the data.

I collected the data for this study from the following sources: (a) the demographic questionnaire (appendix D); (b) the image, song, piece of poetry, part of nature, or something else the participant was instructed to bring to the interview that expressed her experiences on the wilderness rites of passage quest and served as an introduction; and (c) the in-person interview. For the interview, I had supplied the participants with an advance copy of the open-ended interview questions (appendix E). The intent of providing the advance copy of the questions was to alleviate any anxiety about the interview and to allow the time spent during the interview to move more quickly to meaningful aspects of the participants’ wilderness rites of passage experiences. It also served the purpose of prompting the memories of the participants regarding their wilderness rites of passage experiences and focusing their attention on elements of those experiences that compelled transformation. I asked each participant to think about these

questions before the interview, to be aware of any dreams they had while preparing for the interview, and to write down any of those dreams that seemed important to them. Also, I asked the participants, if they were comfortable doing so, to engage in some shamanic journeying to help them remember their wilderness rites of passage experiences and their impressions of those experiences. I suggested that they spend some time in nature to bring back the feeling of their experience and, in their recollections, to be alert to other than human beings and synchronistic occurrences that may have played a part in their quests. I asked the participants to review the experiences of their own vision quests with alertness for the meaningful synchronicities that may have occurred both then and since they had volunteered for the study. Being alert to such occurrences and noting them, I believed, could possibly provide further data for this study.

I began each interview by setting an intention to have dreams regarding the interview, paying special attention to those dreams, and recording them as part of the research data. I also journeyed before each interview and asked my guides to aid me in understanding each participant's story. When the interview session began, I opened sacred space with a few minutes of drumming or rattling. I customarily use words to open sacred space, but, in the instance of the interviews with the participants of this study, I did not want words to influence their memories and sensations about their wilderness rites of passage experiences. All the wilderness rites of passage participants were familiar with a similar ceremony, which served in all interviews to promote heart-felt communication in three ways: (a) to create a sense of the sacredness of the stories; (b) to promote a feeling of safety enabling them to relate sensitive and numinous experiences; and (c) to remind the participants of their wilderness rites of passage experience by sound of the drum, by smell (like sage smudging), by sight, and by feeling. By design, all of the interviews occurred at a location of the participant's selection. In most cases the participant

chose to be interviewed in a natural setting. This environment helped reinforce the connection the participant developed with Nature during the time of his or her wilderness rites of passage experience. These ceremonies furthered the awakening of the unconscious processes of the wilderness rites of passage solo experience and the materials incorporated into consciousness from those processes.

I sat with the participant and asked her to use the object she chose to bring as an introduction about herself and her connection with Nature. I began the interview by placing a “talking staff” between the participant and me. A “talking staff” is a symbol employed in an indigenous tradition: Only the holder of the staff may speak, such speech must come from the heart, and all others listen with the “ears of their hearts.” I then asked the first question, planned to be, Please, tell me, in your own words, about your transformative wilderness rites of passage experience and then place the talking staff back on the ground. The participant was invited to take the staff, as she or he felt moved to do so, and to talk from the heart about his or her wilderness rites of passage solo, following the prompting question that had been previously provided to him or her. Speaking from the heart, without first filtering the speech through consciousness, encourages the surfacing of unconscious and collective unconscious material. When needed, I followed this question up with questions like, Why do you believe that this occurrence was significant? How did you determine it was in fact transformative? Why and how was it transformative? Of course, these questions are those I had planned to ask. I did, in fact, ask some variant of each of these questions. In most cases much of the information sought in the questions was provided without my having to ask many questions after the first. The actual questions I asked are included in the transcripts.

Following that series of questions, if necessary, I asked the second question, planned to be, You were selected as a participant in this study because you indicated that this wilderness rites of passage experience resulted in psycho-spiritual transformation; please tell me more about the lived experience of this psycho-spiritual transformation. Again, if necessary, I planned to follow up with prompts like, What was the nature of the experience you lived (a) at the time it occurred, (b) at the time you recognized it as transformational, and (c) over time as you and it have evolved? as well as, How has your life changed as a result of this experience? and, How do you expect your life to change in the future as a result of this experience?

Then I asked something similar to the planned final question, Please tell me what was going on in your life at the time of the experience and how you have consciously integrated this experience into your life? Follow-up questions, if necessary, were similar to, If you have not integrated the experience into your life, what have been the obstacles to the integration? I also may have asked something similar to, Did other things in your life (unconscious processes such as therapy, dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, or mystical events) help you to integrate this experience? Has the experience caused any disruption in your life? or, How has this integration clarified your life journey?

A portion of the storytelling by each of the participants was gently focused on relating specific incidences that compelled her to seek transformation in her life. I explored that intention, the integration of the experience, and the transformation. I also inquired as to each of the participants' perception of where he or she expects the experience, integration, and transformation to go from where it currently is. I was also attentive to the possibility for the emergence from the participants' stories of the shadow side of wilderness rites of passage, such as disintegration and cultural rejection anticipated or realized upon bearing witness to such an

experience in a society that generally holds such work in disregard. I asked the participant to be aware of sensation in his body, as well as of any synchronicities he observed, and to relate those to me throughout the interview. My own intuition, as well as that of the participant, directed the questioning to go where it needed to go.

As the interview was winding down, I asked each participant to select from an assortment of representations of the Fool card from several Tarot card decks in an attempt to invoke a non-verbal and intuitive reaction by the participants to their respective wilderness rites of passage experiences. I selected the Fool card because of the Fool's archetypal significance as a wanderer or quester. Also, my text was the Coyote Fool card. I expected that whatever force drew me, a wilderness rites of passage quester, to that card might also draw other questers to their own Fool cards. Most participants selected more than one Fool card. I found that the participants' selection of Fool cards and their described projections onto the Fool cards contained data that was very helpful in understanding their wilderness rites of passage experiences, the transformation they were believed to have aided, and the impact of that transformation in the participants' lives. In the cases where more than one Fool card was selected, I have designated, in my subsequent descriptions, the one selection each participant made to which she attached the most meaning.

The interviews were recorded, with the participants' permission, by a small electronic recorder and were later transcribed. I decided that I would personally transcribe all of the interviews (an example of which is included in appendices in its entirety) for two principle reasons: (a) I wanted to note in the interviews communications from the non-human participants, such as, birds, deer, dogs, insects, and so forth, and (b) I wanted to immerse myself in the sentiments expressed in intonation, pauses, and tears in an attempt to understand, beyond the mere words, the experiences that were shared. The reader will notice notes about these additional

data in the transcripts.

I chose to design the study so that the stories of the participants would be reported anonymously. I have assigned fictitious names to each of the participants. The names emerged from my intuitive feelings regarding the essence of the individuals' wilderness rites of passage experiences or transformations. The pseudonyms for each participant evolved as I worked with the data for that participant. Likewise, in the transcripts, I have removed all references to the proper names of individuals included in the interview and substituted descriptors such as guide, wife, son, and so forth. I found that in several cases the assurance of anonymity decreased the participants' filtering of the data they presented.

Because I had promised each of the participants a copy of the report of my findings (see the Appendix B: Informed Consent Agreement), I had some trepidation about including those intuitive insights that might not be perceived as complimentary. I resolved not to filter any information that came to me through my intuition, regardless of what I might think of its "propriety" regarding its potential offensiveness to others. Anderson (2008) recommends "bringing emotional honesty to the fore" (p. 35) in reporting findings in an Intuitive Inquiry study. If I were to exercise such self-censoring filters as concern for propriety, I might be unconsciously tempted to hide from others and myself potentially valuable information under the guise of politeness. Furthermore, I recognize that any information I intuit reflects much more about me, my quest, and my psycho-spiritual development than it does about any participant, her quest, or her psycho-spiritual development. I want the participants reading the result of this study to know that each of you has graciously helped me on my own journey, as the report itself evidences. If I have written anything you find offensive about your quest or your experiences, please know that I intended no offense. Please view such information for what it really is—my

own processes and projections.

I also participated in my own study as a coparticipant. I underwent each of the procedures, employed each of the explorations outlined above for the participants, and recorded my own story as if I had interviewed myself. I opened sacred space and employed the talking staff when I recorded my own story, just as the other participants did.

At the conclusion of the data gathering phase of Cycle 3, I possessed the following data:

1. Demographic data provided by the participants and the coparticipant.
2. Either the participants' and coparticipant's individual images, songs, pieces of poetry, parts of nature, or something else that expressed their experience on the wilderness rites of passage quest, if they were willing to leave it with me for the *Cycle 4* phase of the study, or a description and memory of that object if they had felt uncomfortable leaving it with me for a while.
3. Recordings of the interviews with each participant and the coparticipant.
4. Transcriptions of the interviews with each participant and the coparticipant.
5. The picture of the Tarot card or cards that each participant selected at the end of the interview.
6. Records of my dreams, if any, and journeys about the interviews (including the interview of myself as the coparticipant).
7. Other information collected through the use of my intuitive explorations.

In chapter 4 I summarize these data, employing descriptive analysis, and in chapter 5 provide a thematic content analysis I conducted together with the processes of Cycle 4, in order that Cycle 5, reported in chapter 6, could proceed. In the summarization process of the descriptive analysis, I interpret the data on many levels, including emotional, kinesthetic, and

mental levels. I was alert to my dreams about the data, employed shamanic journeying as a method of engaging the archetypal aspects of the data, took questions about the data to Nature, was alert to nonverbal information contained in and around the data, examined the data in sacred space, checked in with my body to understand what I felt about the data and wrote of that using embodied writing, wrote using Nature writing techniques, was alert to synchronicities, and used creative expression in summarizing the data. “Inclusion of the nonverbal, as an additional avenue for knowing, for processing, and for expressing, can greatly increase the yield of any investigation” (Braud, 1998, p. 54). These nonverbal ways of knowing support the Intuitive Inquiry purpose to relate experiences on as many levels as possible and to describe the experience so fully that others reading the descriptions can have a similar experience. Anderson (1998, 2008) referred to this process as sympathetic resonance, a validation process for intuitive research. It can occur as the researcher, participants, and readers interact emotionally with the data. I used a panel of two persons, Annie Bloom and Melanie Hearth, who have previously experienced wilderness rites of passage—and who, in my opinion, exhibited extraordinary intuitive skills—as a resonance panel to validate the sympathetic resonance of my summary reports. My summary of the data gathered in Cycle 3 of the data tries to capture, as meaningfully as possible, the nonverbal, sympathetic resonance of the stories related to me in the interview of the study’s participants. To validate that my writing had captured the sympathetic resonance with its readers, the resonance panel reviewed my writing and provided me with valuable feedback, as necessary.

Annie Bloom and Melanie Hearth comprised the resonance panel. Annie has been a wilderness rites of passage guide for many years. She works with Animas Valley Institute and my mentor, Plotkin. She is mentioned many times in the works of Plotkin (2003). Annie has

participated in and led many wilderness rites of passage and is one of the most intuitive people I know. She lives relatively close to me and I was certain that she would be willing to serve on this committee if asked. Melanie Hearth is an artist, a Reiki Master energy healer, and a psychologist with a Ph.D. in the synergy of art and healing from Union Institute and University. She is currently in training with Animus Valley Institute to become a wilderness rites of passage guide. I met Melanie in my search for participants for this study, and synchronistic circumstances resulted in her not being a participant but volunteering to be a member of the resonance panel.

In chapter 5, I also present a thematic content analysis (TCA) of the data to supplement the meaningful description of the data. Following Anderson's (2007) suggestion, "The researcher's own feelings and thought about the themes or what the TCA themes may signify are largely irrelevant to a TCA" (p. 1), I took the thematic content analysis primarily from the content of the transcripts. Undoubtedly I employed my intuition in discerning and categorizing the various themes identified in the TCA process; however, following Anderson's (2007) advice, I tried not to engage my own feelings and thoughts about the themes during this Cycle 3 presentation of the data.

I employed the following processes in conducting the thematic content analysis, drawing liberally from the outline for such analysis presented by Anderson (2007):

1. I electronically highlighted the descriptions in the transcripts of the interview that were relevant to the questions asked in this study. The criterion I used for determining their relevance was whether the description related to (a) an experience during a wilderness rites of passage quest, (b) the context of the participant's life when she decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest, (c) the reason the participant decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest, (d) the psycho-spiritual transformation the

participants attributed to the wilderness rites of passage experiences, or (e) shadow aspects of the participants' experiences regarding their wilderness rites of passage quests.

2. From these highlighted descriptions, I identified each distinct unit of meaning of each interview transcript. I employed Anderson's (2007) definition of unit of meaning: "Meaning units are separated by a break or change in meaning" (p. 2). Each time a participant shifted from one meaning concept to another, I identified a new unit of meaning. This process required judgment and intuition. I tried, however, not to allow my personal feelings about the topics to impair my judgment.
3. I copied and pasted each unit of meaning from all of the transcripts onto new Word documents labeled with the initial categories of themes. I attempted to use keywords or phrases copied from highlighted texts to label these categories.
4. I read through all units of meaning for each category and redistributed units of meaning amongst the categories as I thought appropriate.
5. I let these groupings sit for several days at a time, and then I reread the original interview transcripts to determine whether I would discover new units of meaning or new categories.
6. I also let the categories as a whole sit for several days, and then I reread them. I considered whether I had too many (or too few) categories to make meaningful sense of the interview transcripts as they related to the topics of my study. I ultimately grouped and divided some of the categories into themes and sub-themes.
7. I created the tables that group the themes into major groups of the outlined relevance and further divided these groups into themes and sub-themes. These tables are

presented in chapter 5. (Representative direct quotes identified in step 2 are included in the tables.) I then sorted and re-sorted the tables to discover frequencies of certain themes, to identify themes by participant, and to identify participants by themes.

8. Until I finally wrote the presentation that appears in chapter 5, I continually re-labeled the categories and collapsed or subdivided categories as appropriate.

Again, as Anderson (2007) suggests, “In Intuitive Inquiry, when TCA is used to present a description of the findings in Cycle 3, the inter-subjective meaning of TCA themes is presented as interpretive lenses in Cycle 4 of the Discussion” (p. 2); therefore, I present my intuitive impressions of the thematic content analysis in chapter 5 at the conclusion of the TCA presentation, when the discussion of Cycle 4 of this Intuitive Inquiry study begins.

*Cycle 4: Transforming and refining lenses.* Anderson (2006) pointed out that the purpose of Cycle 4 is to allow the researcher to expand and refine the prestudy understanding he brought to the topic by engaging the understanding of others. The reader of the study can then witness the changes from the presentation of the topic provided in Cycle 2 to that provided in Cycle 4.

I employed the procedures outlined in appendix L in soulfully engaging with, immersing in, and incubating the data to gain an understanding of the relationship between the topic and the data obtained in the research. I opened sacred space prior to each session of working with the data. In that space, I analyzed the data from all of the sources: the object of art each participant brought to introduce herself and express her relationship to Nature, my own recorded dreams and journeys, the participants’ selection of their Fool cards, and the interviews with the participants. I used hermeneutical thematic content analysis to gain a deeper understanding of, and to extract meaning from, each source of data. The discovery of the thematic content of these data sources involved subtle intuitive clues accessed through feelings in my body, my dreams,

synchronicities, messages in Nature, and mystical sources. As I sorted through the data and attempted to assemble them into themes, I was alert to thoughts that arose spontaneously. In addition, throughout the treatment of the data, I continued my dialogue with Coyote for as long as he wanted to continue the dialogue.

With the intention of gaining an intuitive insight into the collected data, I also took all of these data with me for a 3-day quest in the wilderness. I was alone and fasting for 1 of these days; for the other 2 days, my wife, Nora, was present to help me with logistics and to hold sacred space while I was immersed in the data. The place we went to for this purpose is labeled Lake Canyon on the map and is located in southeastern Utah where we own some land. Interestingly, several years ago, we had named this property Coyote Canyon after some of its indigenous and very vocal occupants.

These methods of analysis enabled me to reexamine my preliminary Cycle 2 lenses, as I allowed themes and theories to percolate intuitively from the data, rather than attempting to filter the data's messages through those lenses.

*Cycle 5: Integration of findings with literature review.* This cycle is one of reevaluation of the entire study through observation of the relationship between the forward arc and the return arc of the hermeneutic circle (Anderson, 2006).

I examine and discuss in chapter 5 the findings of the data collection and treatment in relationship to the original literature review and the study's questions. The data assembled and intuitively interpreted shed new light on the original literature review and its applicability to the study. This cycle of the research provided me the opportunity to consider the forward arc of the study. In chapter 5 I explore how the study has informed me and added meaningful texture to my life. Furthermore, I search the findings of the study for evidence of the applicability of

wilderness rites of passage as a tool for psycho-spiritual transformation in the lives of its participants.

At the same time, this cycle allowed for reflection about mistakes that were made in the planning or conducting of the study. In chapter 5 is a description of how I questioned whether the procedures and plans employed worked. I make note there of my own confusion and apprehensions that arose during the study and of the intuitive style that I developed. I evaluate the credibility and transferability of each step in the study, including the design, the type of data, and my interpretation of it. I also consider what has remained undiscovered and could be the subject of future research.

### *Summary*

This chapter presents Intuitive Inquiry (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2006, 2008) as the research method that is used in this study. Intuitive Inquiry is a research method that is informed by the researcher's experience with the topic, a process resulting in a unique marriage of intuition and intellectual precision. Intuitive research typically involves topics that are of particular interest to the researcher, and I have indicated that I have a particular interest in the modern wilderness rites of passage quest. The process of Intuitive Inquiry provided transpersonal transformation to the participants in this study and to me. The intuitive explorations I used for this study were (a) dream work, (b) shamanic journeying, (c) taking the question to Nature, (d) working in sacred space, (e) embodied writing, (f) Nature writing using Tredinnick's approach when writing about my own experiences, (g) observing synchronicities, and (h) engaging inner process through archetypal Fool cards. I employ at least five successive, sometimes iterative, cycles of interpretation to aid in the unfolding of the process of Intuitive Inquiry: Cycle 1, Clarifying and Engaging the Research Topic; Cycle 2, Developing the Preliminary Lenses; Cycle

3, Collecting Data and Preparing Summary Reports; Cycle 4, Transforming and Refining Lenses; and Cycle 5, Integration of Findings and Literature Review (Anderson, 2006).

## Chapter 4: Summary of Participants' Interviews

### *Introduction*

This chapter contains an introduction to the study's participants; a description of their interviews, including the identification of some personal themes that emerged from those interviews; and a thematic content analysis of common group themes that arose in the interviews. First, I introduce the participants to the reader by their pseudonyms. I then provide a description of the highlights of each interview, together with an identification of the participant's personal themes that emerged and my intuitive impressions. Finally, through a process described in chapter 3, I examine the common group themes that emerged in the interviews. This chapter allows the reader to become acquainted with 12 amazing questers and to understand the context of their decisions to quest, the nature of the experiences they had during their quests, and the psycho-spiritual transformations they have undergone as a result of their quests.

### *Participants*

Six males and 6 females in six different states (Utah, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, North Carolina, and New Jersey) were interviewed for this study over a period of 3 months. These 12 seemingly perfect participants came forward in synchronistic ways, and each contributed significantly to this study. Each of the participants willingly shared her wilderness rites of passage experiences without much prompting. The pseudonyms for each participant evolved as I worked with the data for that participant. In each case, in a completely unforced manner, an element of the participant's story struck me intuitively as the essence of the participant's experience or transformation. In some cases, I had a visual image; in others I had a feeling in my heart regarding the appropriate pseudonym for that participant. I allowed the process to be fluid, and some names changed in the course of reporting certain participants'

stories because of new insights that emerged. The participants are introduced here by their pseudonyms and, for the sake of the promised anonymity, are referred to in the balance of the study by those pseudonyms.

*Ancient Tree* is a 57-year-old man who lives near Portland, Oregon, where he owns and operates a landscaping business. He participated in a wilderness rite of passage about a year before his interview.

*Climber*, a 47-year-old woman, lives in Salt Lake City, Utah and makes her living as an artist. She also has a master's degree in transpersonal psychology, with an ecopsychology emphasis, from a reputable university. A professor with whom I had studied at that university introduced me to Climber. Her first wilderness rites of passage experience occurred about 3 years before her interview. She has trained with two outstanding quest providers to become a wilderness rites of passage guide.

*Dreamer*, a 60-year-old man, has been a wilderness rites of passage guide and a counselor to help questers integrate the messages of their quests into their lives. He participated in his first of several wilderness rites of passage quests 21 years ago. Currently, he guides wilderness rites of passage quests for older questers and lives in Durango, Colorado.

*Earth Child* is a 55-year-old woman who lives in Durham, North Carolina. She works as a pediatric nurse in the Durham area. Her first wilderness rites of passage quest took place approximately 13 years ago. She has experienced several wilderness rites of passage quests and served with one of the premiere quest providers as a guide on several quests.

*He Bear*, a 54-year-old man, works as a computer programmer in a highly secret program for a government contractor near his home in Holladay, Utah. He participated in his first wilderness rites of passage quest a little over 2 years before his interview.

*Lioness* is a 50-year-old woman who works near her home at a company in Boulder, Colorado that was recently acquired by a much larger company. She had only recently participated in a wilderness rites of passage quest but felt that her experience was transformational.

*She Bear* is a 50-year-old woman lawyer who lives in Sandy, Utah. She gave up the practice of law and currently coordinates the efforts of a nonprofit that helps people in Brazil. She first participated in a wilderness rites of passage quest a little over 2 years before her interview. She has since participated in another quest.

*Soul Dancer* is a 75-year-old woman who lives in Leonia, New Jersey, just across the Hudson River from New York City. Her first wilderness rites of passage quest occurred 8 years ago. She currently works with the elderly providing Earth-based spiritual programs.

*Spearman*, a 53-year-old man, currently works as an instructor in psychology at a community college near Sandy, Utah where he lives. Spearman's first wilderness rites of passage quest took place approximately 10 years ago. Uniquely, his quest was self-guided and he was alone for the entire quest. He has since led many desert retreats, similar to wilderness rites of passage, to the same area where he first quested.

*Spider Woman* is a 30-year-old woman—the youngest participant in this study. She lives in Seattle, Washington, where she cares for her young daughter. Her wilderness rites of passage quest occurred 2 years before our interview.

*Stillwater*, a 32-year-old man, currently works in the evenings as a gas station attendant near his home in Cottonwood Heights, Utah. He participated in his wilderness rites of passage quest a little more than 2 years ago.

*Thinker* is a 58-year-old man who lives in Durham, North Carolina. He is currently a

retired Ph.D. in chemistry who worked for several years with a major pharmaceutical company. He has participated in many wilderness rites of passage quests, the first one approximately 10 years ago.

*Re-searcher* is a 57-year-old man. I work as a business consultant in Salt Lake City, Utah. I participated in my first wilderness rites of passage quest 13 years ago. I have led several quests and hope to use the information I garner from this study to be a more effective wilderness rites of passage guide in the future.

### *Summary of Interviews With Participants*

What follows is a summary of the interviews of the participants in this study. I have included, with her consent, the entire transcript of Climber's interview as a sample transcript in appendix L. The reader is invited to read this transcript to gain his own intuitive insights into the data presented here. As noted in chapter 3 above, resonance validity was also tested by a resonance panel whose comments and input have been incorporated into the presentation of my intuitive reactions to the interviews.

*Ancient Tree.* We met at World Forestry Center in Washington Park just outside of Portland, which provided a picturesque and peaceful setting for our interview. Ancient Tree was very eager to participate in this study and I intuitively sensed from our email correspondence that he would be a very good participant. He exhibited a great deal of enthusiasm about his wilderness rites of passage experience and about life generally and his life in particular. In person, I found him to be a very humble and sensitive individual. He freely showed intense emotions and shed many tears during the course of our interview. I noticed that my body relaxed in his presence; we trusted each other immediately and completely.

After I rattled for a while and silently called in the directions, Ancient Tree told me he

had decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest because he wanted to find out what his purpose in life was and to make sure his life did not conclude without his having fulfilled that purpose. Ancient Tree, in answering the question about the context of what was going on in his life when he decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest, related that he had been losing interest in his life and did not have a clear idea of what he was “supposed” to have done with it. He stated, “I wanted to have done what I was supposed to do. And I didn’t know for sure what that was.” Ancient Tree shared a description of some of his tough childhood with me during the interview. I felt that his wilderness rites of passage quest allowed him to reflect and receive from the tree that he is a being of great “worth” to the world.

He related his experience of receiving a message from an ancient tree, the image of which I selected as his pseudonym for this study. He showed me, as an introduction, a piece of petrified wood from that ancient tree that he had brought back from his wilderness rites of passage quest. He said of this message, “I can still hear it booming off the canyon walls there.” The message was, “The things that you will do will have an effect on the world that will last for longer than I have been around.” In response to a question about how this message had felt to him when he received it, Ancient tree remembered that the first feeling was one of instant knowing and “the other was the realization of worth that I had; to be told something like this.”

Ancient Tree had the additional experience of sensing a need for freedom but being guided by natural guides, primarily by an insect, to a solo spot located in a narrow, confining canyon—a solo spot that provided a cocoon of meaning for him. Notwithstanding this confinement, he related that he spent much of the time during his solo presence there wandering around without any clothes and feeling free. In the course of the interview, when I asked some probing questions about his feeling of being “locked up inside” and whether this was related to

his need to be free, he became very emotional and said, “I think I’m learning something here. Yeah, what it is is: I want to be free to be me.”

Ancient Tree, in his description of his wilderness rites of passage experiences, repeatedly mentioned one theme: a connection with Nature and Nature as a teacher. He told me that these experiences had caused him to undertake a psycho-spiritual transformation in his life. Regarding his connection with Nature, he described how he had sought refuge in Nature as a young child, loved to hunt and trap, and now worked in landscaping. Ancient Tree said the conversation with the piece of petrified wood provided the transformative experience of his wilderness rites of passage quest. Many times in the interview, in a variety of wordings, he mentioned how the sense of purpose this message provides him infuses him with a renewed excitement about his life.

A renewed excitement about life, a meaningful purpose, and an enthusiasm to pursue that purpose describe the transformation Ancient Tree believed had occurred in his life as a result of his wilderness rites of passage experience. Of this transformation, Ancient Tree stated, “The way my life has changed is: I am so fucking excited about it.” He related that he believes he has a purpose in life: to develop and provide sustainable landscaping. Interestingly, the context for his choice to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest—to find a purpose in his life—and the transformation he attributes to his wilderness rites of passage quest experience—that he feels his life has a purpose and he is excited about it—complement each other perfectly. I sensed that Ancient Tree is deeply engaged in the process of integrating the message he received on his wilderness rites of passage quest into his life.

He shared his sense of his accomplishing his life’s mission through his landscaping business. He has studied sustainable landscaping and employs it in his landscape design and

installation whenever he can convince his clients of its benefits. The trees he plants may well live longer than the tree that provided him with his message during his wilderness rite of passage. Importantly, he believes those trees will have an impact on the world throughout their lives and beyond.

It was my impression that what Ancient Tree could contribute to the world is to free himself to be himself. I recognized immediately that I projected my own experience of setting myself free onto Ancient Tree. As with all of us, he does not feel that he has completed this integration; he senses that he is well on his way. I felt that Ancient Tree has a love for life, his own and that of the Earth.

When I got to the point in the interview when I ask participants to select one of the Fool card pictures, I realized I had left the pictures in my car and told Ancient Tree about the pictures, and that I would have to run and get them. Ancient Tree told me he had a picture with him that he received on his wilderness rites of passage quest that he thought represented him very well. He pulled it out of his journal and we talked about it. I have included it below as Figure 1. He observed that, at first, he thought the woman in the picture represented him and that the light was circling into him, but that, after the quest, he saw the light as emanating from him.

*Intuitive impressions of Ancient Tree's story.* During a shamanic journey on my wilderness quest with the data from Ancient Tree's interview, I wondered if the solidification of the essence of a tree into the piece of petrified wood (the object Ancient Tree brought to introduce himself) is symbolic of the solidification of Ancient Tree's love for the essence of who he is. Like the petrified wood, his solid basis of self-respect and self-love could, symbolically, represent a foundation upon which he can build a monument in the world that will outlast the ancient tree for which he is named. I envisioned a tree, rock solid in its presence in the world,

with a light bursting from its branches illuminating that world with a radiant, magical brightness that I associated with Ancient Tree. This impression of Ancient Tree was obviously affected by his card picture. I wondered if he picked that card because, at least unconsciously, he knows it reflects the essence of who he is.

Personal themes for Ancient Tree include Context—losing interest in life; Experiences—connection with Nature by being guided by Nature, having Nature as a teacher by hearing a voice verify his value; and Transformation—a sense of purpose and excitement about life.

*Climber.* Climber and I met at a home near her father’s house in Salt Lake City. We sat in a room with many large windows looking out on several trees blooming in bright spring sunshine. By way of introduction, she showed me a stick on which she had engraved the word “integrity” during a solo quest (not her original wilderness rites of passage quest) and the drawing below in Figure 1. Climber described deciding to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest at a point in her life when her “script had run out” (appendix L, line 150), by which she meant that she no longer desired to follow the dictates of her cultural upbringing (Mormon). She had just been through a divorce, which she blamed largely on herself, at the time she decided to quest. She experienced a connection with Nature and being seen as the powerful woman that she is in a moment when, during her solo, she climbed up on a mountain side, took off all of her clothes, stood up and exposed herself to the Presence there “as if to make myself completely visible” (lines 85-86). In addition to the experience on the mountain, she related that a bear wandered by at one point of her quest as if she were not there—invisible. However, as it left, it looked back over its shoulder and “saw” her.



*Figure 1. Climber's drawing.*

Climber related three rich experiences regarding her connection with Nature. In the two instances just described, Climber felt she had been seen by Nature. In another instance she felt connected with Nature when it seemed to respond to her inner emotions, “A rainstorm came in—almost as if I had conjured it up” (appendix L, line 89). In a closely related experience, Climber felt taught by Nature when, standing high on a mountain, she had a moment of clarity of mind when Nature showed her that “I was standing up there and I could see everything, I had a lay-of-the-land” (line 79-80). In another instance, a lizard taught her to let go of her tale (t-a-l-e) in the same way he let go of his tail (t-a-i-l) (line 217).

Climber also described two experiences regarding self-acceptance. She described how “I felt my own power” (appendix L, line 88) and that she had become “a clear vessel of light” (line 35). When asked to select from among the Fool card pictures I presented, Climber selected the card labeled “Potential” illustrating a confident human being leaning against a tree. She indicated that this selection validated how her wilderness rites of passage quest has changed her. She believes, after having had this experience, that she is a powerful person who has an opportunity to use that personal power as an instrument of good in the world.

“To stand up and be visible when you feel that you are not” (appendix L, line 109) emerged from Climber’s descriptions of what was the psycho-spiritual transformation her wilderness rites of passage quest caused in her life. As it was for Ancient Tree—and for all of the participants, for that matter—Climber’s context for participating in a wilderness rites of passage quest and the transformation she attributes to that quest are nearly perfectly parallel.

*Intuitive impressions of Climber’s story.* During a shamanic journey, I saw a glowing figure come out of hiding in a nearby small cave and stand on the cliff. Although she was quite a distance from me, I could see that she wore no clothes. Energy visibly coursed through her glowing body and shot out the ends of her fingers and hair as she stood with her hands at her side forming a delta symbol, the symbol for change. I felt amazed at the sight of this incredible human being and felt honored to bear witness of her. She then raised her hands above her head and plunged into the dark black waters of the subterranean lake.

I wondered if the invisible cave was, for Climber, a metaphor for her wanting to be private and protect herself from judgment of others within the culture of her religion of origin before her wilderness rites of passage quest, in part because she had judged herself harshly, as her culture judged her, regarding her divorce. However, she clearly showed up for the interview

and was anxious to be “seen,” just as she had stood on a cliff, exposed, for Nature to see her. She watched carefully for my reaction as she handed me the drawing in Figure 1. As it shows, and as my shamanic journey had reflected, she was herself a delta symbol, readied for change with a new script, since, as she said, the old one had run out. She glowed with a very clear message received during her wilderness quest of being a powerful woman with the capacity to do much good in the world and for the Earth. She used the phrases “a clear vessel of light” and “visible” to describe the message of her way to be in the world, exactly how I saw her in my underworld journey. She launched with enthusiasm, as if diving off a cliff, into the story of her wilderness rites of passage experience and seemed eager to splash into the mysteries of the deep, dark lake of the unconscious realms. In fact, she says, “Because it [referring to her wilderness rites of passage experience] seems like it’s a never-ending pool of mystery that I can swim in” (appendix L, lines 105-106). (Note: I had forgotten this phrase of Climber’s interview, and, when I reread it after having completed my shamanic journey, I felt the tingle of numinous confirmation that a connection had occurred in that mysterious “place” where we are all connected.) Her drawing shows her well rooted to a place in the world from which her life-force power, seemingly emanating from the depths of Mother Earth, will enable her both to celebrate the sunshine and to endure the storms of life.

Climber believes that the wilderness rites of passage experience infused her with light and visibility. In the moment she shared that belief, she had tears in her eyes and was visibly moved. I, too, was moved in that moment by an intense appreciation for Climber as a marvelous creation of Nature. I glimpsed then, and also later, in my shamanic journey, the power of what it is to be a human being, and I marveled at the human being that Nature appeared to recognize in Climber. Climber’s selection of a card labeled Powerful Self impressed me as a non-reasoning,

intuitive recognition of the greatness that is within her. As I sat with the data regarding Climber's experience and her expression of it, I had a very somatic feeling of being turned inside out, of my inside world becoming part of and fusing with the outside world. The outside world I refer to includes Climber, the other participants in this study, everyone else I know, everyone else I don't know, all creatures, the whole Earth, the whole universe, and everything that exists.

Personal themes for Climber include Context—script had run out; Experiences—connection with Nature by being seen and by interacting with non-human beings, self-acceptance through feeling her own power, and Nature as a teacher; and Transformation—authentic self who stands up for herself and is visible.

*Dreamer.* I interviewed Dreamer in his back yard. It was a warm day in late spring. Several crows and a three-legged cat accompanied us. We drummed together for a few minutes. He introduced himself to me with an article he had published about his first wilderness rites of passage experience.

Dreamer related that his life was in a state of crisis when he decided to go on his first wilderness rites of passage quest. He decided to go on his first wilderness rites of passage quest because he was dissatisfied with his work as a transpersonal counselor, and, in his discouragement, he felt that he had become spiritually disconnected. Of this context, he stated, "I felt I had no direction, no guidance. I had been abandoned."

Dreamer intertwined two themes in his interview regarding the experiences of his wilderness rites of passage quests: self-acceptance and shift in awareness. He described two dreams (which prompted me to provide him with the pseudonym Dreamer) that signaled to him that he has a mission to accomplish during his life. In the first, he dreamed that some presents were wrapped and awaiting him on a table. He accidentally bumped the table and a couple of the

presents, an agate pendant and an opal ring, were exposed. He hurriedly rewrapped them and placed them on the table. He was told that all these gifts would be his when the time was right. He interpreted this message to mean that the gifts were his gifts to be shared with the world when “the time is right.” In a separate dream he argued with his mother about how he had “wasted his life” on guiding wilderness rites of passage quests. He believes that in this dream he heard opposing voices of himself, one telling him that his life’s work was worthwhile and another questioning that fact, using monetary standards. Dreamer said these two dreams are with him constantly. He comes away from both of these dreams with a strengthened self-acceptance.

On his quest, he saw a cloud formation that looked to him like his spiritual teacher reaching out and blessing him. Of this experience he said, “And with that moment came this deep, deep knowing that I hadn’t been abandoned and that true unconditional divine love was with me and supporting me and that, even though my path was difficult and I seemed to be lost in the world, that I was connected and that I was supported.” This vision imbued him with a shift in awareness and self-acceptance. He interpreted that self-acceptance as a sense of purpose to be leading wilderness rites of passage quests. He trained with Stephen Foster and Meredith Little at the School of Lost Borders and subsequently led quests under the auspices of his own organization. Later he recited that, on another occasion, he gained a “deep knowing” that the Universe has something for him when he said to the Universe, “I give up the struggle. You know, if you’ve got something for me I’m open . . . all of a sudden a wonderful peace came on me.”

A sense of purpose in life and the conviction that he has followed the guidance of his soul emerged from Dreamer’s description of how his life has transformed as a result of his wilderness rites of passage experiences. Of these insights, Dreamer says, “I have done the best that I can;

there is this larger unfolding happening through me; my soul is guiding me.” Notable once again are the parallels evident in the context of Dreamer’s quest: needing direction, the transformation he credits the quest with promoting in his life, and recognition of a large unfolding happening through him.

I reflected that Dreamer seemed to be an example of someone whose life was impacted by an experience during a wilderness rites of passage quest. He has followed the purpose, as he felt guided to do, in spite of great personal sacrifice. He believes that, because he has done so, there are gifts he has only glimpsed that will be revealed to him when the time is right. The Fool card representation he selected was a Fool stepping off the edge of a cliff, as he looks skyward, eyes filled with love.

*Intuitive impressions of Dreamer’s story.* A shamanic journey with Dreamer’s data provided me with the strong impression that Dreamer’s gift is the beautiful, loving, giving human being that he has become by lovingly and selflessly leading so many people on wilderness rites of passage quests. He provides others with the opportunity potentially to impact their lives in ways similar to those discussed in this study. When he witnessed the cloud formation in the shape of his spiritual leader on his first wilderness rites of passage quest, I have imagined, he witnessed that spiritual part of himself blessing the Dreamer that was seeking confirmation, with the freedom to be and to love himself. I wondered if, when he selected his Fool card, he unconsciously saw himself as an archetypal Fool following his heart regardless of the mundane consequences. I imagined that he experiences the leap of love by coming into his own power, faithfully following his soul purpose, and taking the leap to love himself.

The wonderful gifts that Dreamer glimpsed as they fell off the table in his dream seemed to me to reflect the amazing being that is Dreamer. I imagined that he unconsciously glimpsed

his own power, which impressed him; he loved what he saw. However, he quickly hid it from himself again. The voice of his mother, like that of many of our mothers, cast doubts, as Dreamer himself related, about his greatness in his mind and haunts him still. I see in Dreamer's eyes, I hear in his voice, I observe in his body language evidence that indicates that, although he believes in his core that he is fulfilling his life's purpose, he senses that the world takes little notice. He does his work quietly, competently, and without much public recognition. Others doing similar work are well known for what they do. I wondered if Dreamer critiques himself as he believes the world critiques him. He may hear this self-critique in the voice of his mother. The gift of Dreamer's power and impact on the world will, I imagine, be revealed to him when the time is right—that time arrives, I sense, when he allows himself fully to see and to love his own greatness.

Personal themes for Dreamer include Context—life in crisis; Experiences—self-acceptance by receiving a dream message of his mission, a shift in awareness by gaining a deep knowing and a sudden peace; and Transformation—sense of purpose in following his soul.

*Earth Child.* I met with Earth Child in her backyard in Durham on a muggy summer afternoon. She provided me with some of her writing work as an introduction: a letter regarding her wilderness rites of passage quest, an article she authored entitled *Bees, Deer, Madmen and Lions*, and a dream she had recorded, together with a record of the dream work she had done regarding it.

The context of her decision to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest presented as unsatisfied hunger. She described a feeling that compelled her to go on the quest: "It was an urge; it was just some pull that I felt." Earth Child "didn't grow up in a family that did much outside," but, when she turned 40 years old, she celebrated with an Outward Bound trip. As a

result of a connection with Nature she discovered during that trip, she decided to do a wilderness rites of passage quest 2 years later. She related that, “It was nothing that catapulted me to it in terms of specific life events.” She described that she felt “some hunger for something different, for something in addition.” In response to my question of where she thought the hunger came from, she said, “At the time, and probably still, I would describe it as a soul call, as a numinous call. . . . From the perspective I have now I think that . . . it was a sense in which my body was calling to me, in which the Earth was calling, and I was wanting to come home.”

Earth Child’s experiences during her wilderness rites of passage quest related to her connection with Nature and being at home on Earth. She described the transformational experience on her wilderness rites of passage quest when she was called from the warmth of her sleeping bag to go and lay naked upon the Earth. She expected to feel the cold of the ground but instead felt warmth and connectedness. She told me, “This was a real direct experience for me, a physical experience of . . . connection with this Earth and of coming home, in the sense that this is my home now.” She discussed that, because she grew up in an urban area, she had never felt at ease in the wilderness, and, in fact, had a sense that she did not belong to Earth. She told of subsequent experiences of feeling grounded with the Earth and that being an Earth child describes who she is, and serves as the impetus for her pseudonym of Earth Child. In the article she authored that she provided me, she had written: “The woman went out as a stranger to this place, this Earth, searching for a deeper connection with her body, her soul, her Earth, her heart. . . . A daughter of this Earth returned from the wilderness; a newborn soul; a hero with a lightened heart.”

The psycho-spiritual transition Earth Child underwent resulting from her wilderness rites of passage experiences emerged as understanding her authentic self. When I asked Earth Child

how she thought the experience had changed her, she said, “It’s who I am. . . . It’s part of me in a real fundamental way. . . . And it’s also what I do when I wake up, it’s what I do when I get up in the morning, kind of the choices I make everyday.” This theme is demonstrated repeatedly in her interview. Even the shadow elements of her continued experience with wilderness rites of passage found root deep within the Earth of who Earth Child really is. Earth Child’s interview demonstrated a unique focus on the theme of her needing to know who she was and where she belonged. She felt pulled, compelled, and urged to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest. The theme of the transformation resulting from that quest turned out to be a very evident and clear confidence in her identity as a child of the Earth.

Earth Child selected a Fool card picture with a man standing on his hands by the banks of a river surrounded by symbols because, as she said, her Earth name at one time was Edgewater. I think that the turmoil illustrated in the picture, the human character upside down surrounded by seemingly chaotic symbols, touched the part of Earth Child that had become desperate to escape the chaos of daily life and reconnect with the Earth, her home.

*Intuitive impressions of Earth Child’s story.* Earth Child is, as she states, what she became on her wilderness rites of passage quest. She seems very grounded and very at home. She lives her love for the Earth. Their bond felt to me like a true mother-daughter relationship. I felt very honored to talk with her and felt she was generous and giving. I sensed something from her guarded gaze, however, that prompted me to ask what else she wanted to tell me. I could feel a sympathetic pain during the interview that there was some wounding or pain that underlay the beautiful story she was telling me.

In an altered state during a shamanic journey, I stared into the cloud-shrouded sky, letting Earth Child’s story sink into my soul during my wilderness quest, when I imagined a bird in a

cage. The bird struggled to escape the cage, flying repeatedly against the top of the cage, it broke through the cage and flew into the sun. Then a raven flew out of the sun and cawed “Nevermore.” As a result of this imagining in relation to Earth Child, I sensed that, although she exudes love, she cages her love. I wondered if she fears that, if it escapes, does not remain confined to the boundaries she has prescribed, that she may get burned. Perhaps she views her shadow experience as such a burning, and she vows that it will happen nevermore. I imagined that, beneath the surface of one of the most moving people I met during my research, lies even more loving beauty that, for now at least, remains caged.

I find evidence supporting my intuition in Earth Child’s writing. Wondering about why she leaves her comfortable home life so often for the quest in the wilderness, she asks at one point in her writings, “Why do I do this? Why do I wrench myself away from the life that I love, from the people I love, to go into the wilderness, to carry a heavy pack, sleep (if I’m lucky) on the ground, eat sparingly, go without a shower; to face so many unknowns in the company of strangers?” In a separate writing she answers her own questions:

I learned to listen with my heart to the Earth. I learned that there are voices and forms and beings that I can hear and see and feel with my inner senses. I learned that Dreamtime exists. I learned that the sky is limitless and breathtaking and breathgiving and that I am a part of it all—the sky above and the wild place below.

The comfort of her home life may be the cage and the wilderness her limitless sky of freedom. She got burned once during that time of freedom: “Nevermore.” She no longer guides quests, but longs for the wilderness. Fortunately, she recognizes that she deludes herself, “That’s where, I learned, my capacity for self-delusion is” and has undertaken, with her husband, a series of retreats and counseling to free herself. I hope that the powerful being that is Earth Child will become fully free and risk flying into the sun again.

Personal themes for Earthchild include Context—Searching for meaning, a hunger not

fed; Experiences—connection with Nature through connecting with Earth; and Transformation—authentic self because she now knows who she is.

*He Bear.* He Bear and I met in a park on a warm summer Sunday near the University of Utah campus in Salt Lake City where he had just come from an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. I rattled for a few minutes, and we began the interview by his sharing with me a picture of a black bear, shown in Figure 2 below.

When setting the context for his decision to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest, He Bear described a sense that something was missing in his life. He said, specifically, “And it seemed like the answers—asking questions wasn’t working. Something, I want to say, something was missing. A piece was missing. And I was thinking that would be a vision quest.” He Bear then shared with me some of the struggles he had encountered during his life. A connection with Nature emerged from He Bear’s story of the experiences of his wilderness rites of passage quest. This connection was evidenced by his interaction with the creatures surrounding his solo spot. Of this interaction, he said, “I started getting the idea of integrating with the idea of the land and the environment, Nature, and Mother Earth.” He also expressed this connection when he observed that he felt “freedom in the sense that I had no boundaries or that I was part of all of this.”

He experienced a tremendous fear of the black bear he had been told habituated the location he chose for his solo. He Bear reported that, in the midst of several incidences of noticing his peaceful coexistence with his environment, notwithstanding his fear of the bear, he connected with Nature and experienced a shift in awareness. He said of that moment,

A feeling came over me of just bliss. Joy and bliss. Looking at the sky and all I could think about was: Thank you, [Guide Two], thank you, [Guide One], thank you, Great Spirit. Thank you, Universe. I found the moment where I connected, where it all—at that time—I don’t know what that experience was.

In an interesting unfolding during the course of the interview, He Bear revealed that his

psycho-spiritual transformation stemmed from his remembrance of the innocent child within him. He verbalized that he “reconnected” to his “authentic self.” I sensed that, by the term *authentic self*, he meant a Self that included the innocent child that had not been previously integrated. The context of his decision to quest—namely, a missing piece—and the psycho-spiritual transformation he identified—finding a part of him that had been forgotten—obviously complemented each other.



*Figure 2.* He Bear’s fear.

He Bear related a very touching story of how the peace he encountered in his solo spot reminded him of when, as a young boy, he would lock himself in a closet and enjoy the peace and solitude he found there. He Bear related that the wilderness rites of passage quest enabled him to reconnect to that young boy and that he can make that connection now any time he feels he needs to do so. Interestingly, the Fool card picture he selected was a naked man dancing in the sun against a backdrop of a kaleidoscope of colors.

*Intuitive impressions of He Bear's story.* He Bear's description of the struggles of his life profoundly moved me; those struggles, I felt, had left the marks of deep wounds on He Bear. During a shamanic journey with He Bear's data I witnessed a big black bear-of-trouble crashing into the peaceful closet of a small boy and leaving him, in that convoluted logic of children, wondering whether he was worthy of love. His wilderness rites of passage quest gave him a glimpse of joy and peace, notwithstanding the terror of the bear. He associated that feeling of joy and peace with the little boy of himself and seemed to have reacquainted himself with that aspect of him. He stated that he now has the capacity to connect to that little boy whenever he requires the connection, notwithstanding the fear of the bear.

I witnessed in He Bear, notwithstanding—or perhaps because of—the trouble he had endured, a compassionate and tolerant person. I felt that he exuded the joy and peace of which he spoke. I sensed that He Bear was on the path of healing. I felt that he was connecting with his innocent child and administering his own compassion and tolerance to salve his bear-of-trouble wounds.

Personal themes for He Bear include Context—something was missing; Experiences—connection with Nature through feeling of unity and interaction with non-human beings, shift in awareness through a sense of peace and a change in dimensions of reality; and Transformation—

finding authentic self by reconnecting with his innocent child part.

*Lioness.* We met for the interview on Main Street in Old Town Durango, Colorado and walked a short distance to a park on the banks of the Animus River. We sat in the hot sun of a summer morning and had to seek shade part way through the interview. Several crows showed up for the interview and added their background caws. Three mule deer also wandered into our space about halfway through the interview. Lioness, after I had drummed and silently called in the directions, presented me with the Mary Oliver (1992) poem, “The Journey.” She was eager to share her experience and talked expansively, with little or no prompting from me. She was very emotional several times in relating the story and I held her hand at one point as a show of support.

Lioness related that she decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest when she celebrated her fiftieth birthday. Lioness’ response to the question regarding the context of her decision to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest revealed a desire for change in her life. She said very plainly, “I want so badly for things to change”. She also said, “I was afraid that things would change and that they wouldn’t.”

A connection with Nature and self-acceptance emerged from Lioness’ description of the experiences of her wilderness rites of passage quest: A connection with Nature presented itself in two separate ways. Early on in her quest, she remembers sitting on rock that rose to about shoulder level with several surrounding trees. She experienced a feeling of being part of Nature and said in the interview, “I looked at myself as one of them; I have a place in the universe that is solid.” The other experience, similar to Climber’s, involved Nature responding to her inner emotions. She celebrated a breakthrough (related to self-acceptance) and discovered that Nature was celebrating with her. Of this experience she said, “The wind picked up and swirled around

me, a pinecone fell, the birds came closer and started singing, a bee buzzed by, a fly tickled me, a beautiful butterfly (orange and black) flew by.” Regarding self-acceptance, Lioness revealed several times three interrelated concepts: integration of previously unrecognized aspects of herself, recognizing her personal power, and nurturing herself. She told of a powerful dream during her solo in which a dog was attacked and eaten by a bear as she watched, unable to warn or help the dog. She worked with this dream during the quest, acted out the part of each participant in the dream, and discovered that the bear was actually a lioness underneath a bear suit. She told me that she then experienced “Realizing that mountain lion is pure power and what I am looking for is my power.” She discovered a sense of being voiceless in her marriage and her reconfigured job. She felt awkward and stupid as the bear, helpless as the dog, and empowered as the lioness. This experience revealed to her the personal power she possesses.

She also told me of how she had recognized the “crybaby” within herself, put there in part by childhood experiences with her mother and sister: “I feel weak when I . . . am a crybaby or react like a crybaby.” One of the highlights of her wilderness rites of passage experience was the recognition of this part of herself and the realization that this part of her did not define her. In a moving tale of self-love, she told of how “in my imagination, I picked up that baby . . . and then cuddled her.” This act of nurturing and accepting a shadow part of herself provided Lioness a momentous breakthrough during her wilderness rites of passage quest.

The psycho-spiritual transformation she believed resulted from her wilderness rites of passage experiences was recognizing her authentic self. She related that, “I feel fearless. I feel like now I have the courage and strength of character to do what needs to be done.” The context, wherein she wanted things to change, and the psycho-spiritual transformation—that she now feels fearless—appear, as with other participants, to be movingly transposed. She told me that,

when she was writing about her wilderness rites of passage experience, “this overwhelming feeling came over me. Yes, yes. I can do it and I am fearless, and I watched myself, my long-lost, hidden self, emerge from the woods.” She believes the quest has changed the way she views her own power in her worlds: work, marriage, mother, and self. She also selected the image label Potential from among the Fool card pictures I presented her.

*Intuitive impressions of Lioness’s story.* In addition to a shamanic journey to gain insight into Lioness’s data I had a dream about the characters of her dream. From these processes, I was prompted to wonder whether Lioness’ dream reveals something in her yearning to uncover the feminine feral power part of her (the lioness) that lies costumed within a “slow and stupid” masculine (the bear) way of being. I imagined that the peaceful part of Lioness (the dog) could sense that it is being devoured by the-male-cover-up part of her and that the ego part of her (herself in the dream) may find itself voiceless to express concerns about that process. The insight provided to me by my dream left me wondering whether the bear only plays at being the enemy, and I hope that, when all parts of Lioness (the bear, the lion, the dog and her ego) are recognized, she will enjoy the warm embracing hug of integration. We all behave laughably as we project different aspects of ourselves on others, struggle with those aspects, and often even reject them, as, with regard to these aspects of herself, Lioness had also rejected the crybaby (sensitive, innocent, expressive) part of her power. She experienced during her quest the elation of embracing and nurturing all of these different parts of herself.

Lioness was given an opportunity to see certain shadow elements (including “golden shadows”). As she integrates these aspects of herself into her awareness, a process started by the wilderness rites of passage quest, she transforms her psycho-spiritual self and recognizes, as in the Fool card, her potential. Interestingly, the poem she used to introduce herself features a

woman who recognizes her own voice and becomes powerfully “determined to save the only life [she] could save” (Oliver 1992, p. 39). The interview with Lioness provided me the opportunity to witness a human being glimpse her own greatness. It is my hope for her that she will integrate that glimpse into her self-definition.

Personal themes for Lioness include Context—wanted change in life; Experiences—connection with Nature by unity and its response to her emotions, self-acceptance by recognizing parts of herself; and Transformation—authentic self who is fearless.

*She Bear.* I met She Bear at an outdoor Mexican restaurant in Sandy, Utah. The day was bright and hot and we shared a lunch together at an umbrella table. Seeking a path emerged as She Bear’s context for deciding to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest. She relates that she was pursuing a “what is life’s purpose journey” when the opportunity to engage in a wilderness rites of passage quest presented itself to her. She said of the opportunity to go on the quest, “I was consciously on this seeking path and it was a total gift to show up.” She expressed gratitude for the chance consciously to seek direction in her life “because, you know, sometimes life has thrown me into those experiences without me being conscious of it.” She Bear’s story of her wilderness rites of passage quest demonstrated experiences of self-acceptance and Nature as a teacher. She related the experience of carrying too much baggage (to which she attached symbolic significance) for the solo portion of her quest to an area reportedly frequented by a black bear. She spent much of the time during her solo in a terrified state. She had a dream in which her sister and brother-in-law, people who love her, playfully attacked her, while costumed together as a bear. The primary experience of She Bear’s quest was the integration of the scary bear part of her that appeared in that dream, which was revealed to be, in fact, “a big furry blanket of people who love me and want to help make light of that fearful situation.” This theme

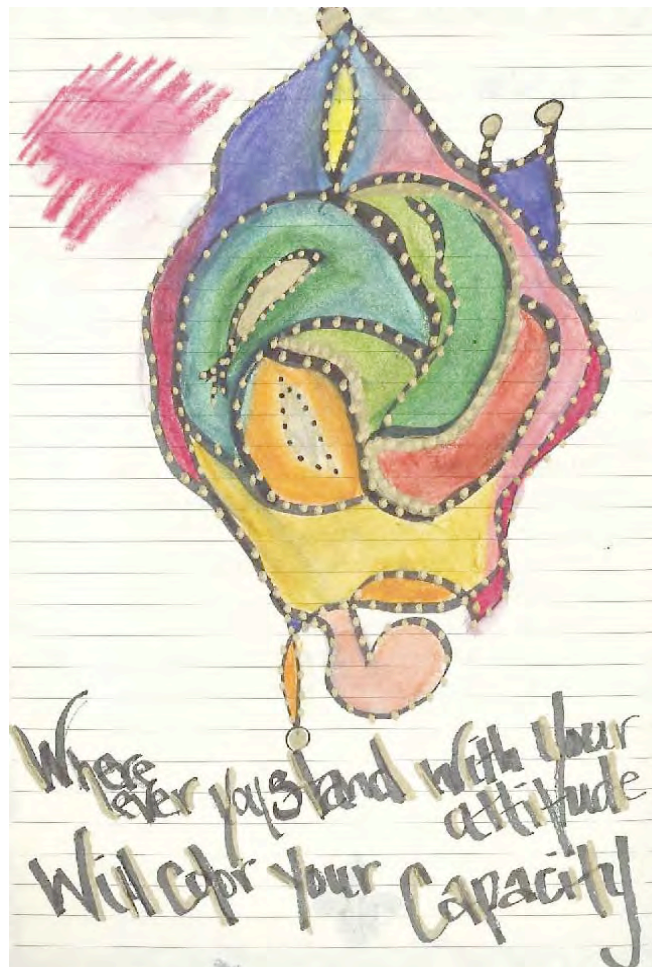
appeared many times, in many different ways in the course of her recitation of her experiences. She also related her realization of a metaphor that Nature taught her regarding the abundant baggage she packed with her to her solo spot. Of this she said, “Every time you want to drop the baggage, [She Bear], feel free to drop it.”

A serenity derived from accepting hardships as challenges revealed itself from She Bear’s discussions of the transformation she has undergone as a result of her wilderness rites of passage experiences. She explicitly recognized this concept when she said, “Things that have shown themselves to be hardships or trials . . . instead I can look at them as a gift.” She was seeking a path, was provided the “gift” of a wilderness rites of passage hardship/opportunity and was transformed by accepting hardships that present themselves as “gifts.” She Bear learned to accept other challenges and fears that show up in her life as if they were friendly attacks of love:

If life is completely challenging I look at it and say, “Oh my gosh, how great this challenge showed up in this way.” Look at the things I am learning. I couldn’t have learned that in any other way. I couldn’t become this person right now at this, you know, in that manner.

She Bear related that this perspective of accepting challenges as growth opportunities illustrates the manner in which her life was transformed by her wilderness rites of passage quest.

*Intuitive impressions of She Bear’s story.* When She Bear related the story of an instructor whose self-presentation had “triggered” her, she said, “And I got so triggered by our instructor. And it felt like his ego was so involved in the training—like he was so proud of himself for what he was teaching.” She mentioned that she also felt some sexual tension in the moment. She then showed me a drawing, below as Figure 3, she had made as an expression of her feelings at that time. I questioned in my notes, immediately after the interview, whether this part of her story and the picture contained meanings beyond those on the surface.



*Figure 3. She Bear's journal page.*

I journeyed through the chakra colors, from red, to orange, to yellow, to green, to blue, to indigo, to violet. It felt to me that I was experiencing what I imagined to be She Bear's emptiness on this journey. The emptiness begins at the green and expands into the yellow and orange. The emptiness feels very lonely—so lonely it hurts. It hurts the most right in the middle of the emptiness, in the yellow and the green. I reflected that She Bear selected the Fool card picture of Tara. Tara, particularly white Tara, represents the goddess of compassion and emptiness in Buddhism. I wondered if She Bear experiences loneliness but is afraid of the bear of love. Her dream showed her the bear is love. She said, "I had been so afraid and that was the bear. Like: Oh, interesting, a big furry blanket of people who love me." When, in her dream, she overcomes

the fear of this bear, she finds it to be a source of love—to fill the gaping chasm of loneliness. She Bear has learned, as she stated, that all obstacles or hardships may not be what they first appear to be, but may, in fact, present opportunities for growth and development. Love is not the bear that will eat you; love is that furry blanket part of you that wraps its warm embrace of compassion around yourself and allows other to do so, too. I find She Bear to be very loveable: a human being freely giving love to all who encounter her, but a little stingy with what she gives to herself. I saw the beginning of her recognition of how deservingly marvelous she is. I hope she saw in my eyes that I was convinced she was both deserving and marvelous.

Personal themes for She Bear include Context—search for meaning, on the path; Experiences—self-acceptance by recognizing parts of herself, Nature as a teacher through metaphor; and Transformation—serenity by accepting trials as gifts.

*Soul Dancer.* I arrived at Soul Dancer's house in Leonia, New Jersey, in the midst of thunder, lightening, and buckets of rain. I had been delayed by a washout of Interstate 95. I grew up in a town of 11,000 people; I was a little uncomfortable driving through the third most populated urban area in the world. However, Soul Dancer welcomed me with some tea, we sat on her front porch, the rain abated, the sun came out, and birds rejoiced with beautiful tunes. I had my rattle and apologized to Soul Dancer that I would rather have had my drum to open sacred space. She jumped up and returned with a drum and drummed movingly for a few minutes. We then smudged each other, by which time I had calmed from my trip to her home, and she felt more comfortable with me. Soul Dancer shared with me a drawing she had made of two very different flames on opposite sides of the paper. She revealed that the two flames represented different aspects of her nature that had been brought together in the wilderness rites of passage quest. One of the flames danced in abstraction with free flowing lines, while the other

stood its ground in its concisely drawn realism.

Although Soul Dancer's story detailed a very unusual wilderness rites of passage quest, the quest proved to be very impactful in Soul Dancer's life. Her readiness for the next phase of her life emerged as the context in which she had decided to quest. She expressed it as follows: "You've completed this; you are ready to move on to the next life." She decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest because she worked with elderly people, because she had admitted to herself that she, too, was aging, and because the quest had the title "Conscious Elderhood." She told me, "I think there was that underlying message that got me out there."

Soul Dancer related experiences during her wilderness rites of passage quest in which she accepted and integrated previously unrecognized parts of herself into her self-awareness. She participated in the pre-solo portion of the quest and, just as all of the questers undertook to leave on their solos, she felt very scared and ill. The guides wisely took her to a hospital, where, because of a number of factors, the doctors decided to keep her for a couple of days. At this point, many people would have given up and accepted the fact that their wilderness rites of passage quest had been interrupted.

Soul Dancer did not give up. She dreamed a very impactful dream, worked with the dream, and, upon returning to the wilderness for her last day of the solo, ceremonially integrated the experience of the dream. She had dreamed that a young male dancer appeared out of an alleyway as she walked into town, that he danced with her, and asked her to marry him. In the dream she told him she would not marry him; she reasoned: "You are too young, you are too agile and I am, you know, this older person who is a little more staid, but I love to dance." She related that, in the dream, the dancer persisted in getting her to marry him. The next day, in the hospital, she worked with the dream and dialogued with the dancer. Finally, she relented and

decided she would marry him “if he would be aware of my slow behavior because I was older and if I could keep up to whatever extent I could with his younger capabilities.” Upon returning to the wilderness, she conducted a marriage ceremony between herself and the dancer. By the time of the interview she had processed the experience over several years and expressed it unmistakably when she described it as “coming to the understanding of the need to marry both halves of myself.” She described the “other” as the dancer, “the masculine, more salesman-like part of me” and the already integrated parts of her as her soul.

She discovered a life’s purpose for that next phase, which discovery serves as the transformation she believes resulted from the quest. She said, “It made it very clear that my work is with elders.” She expressed the certainty of her purpose many times in the interview. She had wondered what to do with the next phase of her life, and, after some processing, believes her wilderness rites of passage gave it to her. Of the experience, Soul Dancer stated that “that experience of the vision quest and that coming together of everything in my life was the biggest thing, as I mentioned—was the most profound thing—that has ever happened to me. But also it is only the beginning, you know.”

Soul Dancer believes that her experience taught her that she can introduce elderly people to the benefits of a wilderness rites of passage quest without having to venture to some remote wilderness. After all, she experienced a transformational encounter in her hospital room. Furthermore, she recognized the dancer in the dream as a part of herself and that the marriage between her (Soul) and dancer (Dancer) constitutes an integration of an animus part of her into her self. She incorporates these insights into her life by seeking to bring potentially transformational experiences such as that which she experienced into the lives of elderly people in her community. She engages in many activities relevant to that purpose, such as dreamwork,

drum making, and women's groups, in an attempt to bring elements of her experience to others. She shared that "it really takes that masculine aspect of myself to really put myself out there." She has a dream to create a center close to the city that could be used as a place of retreat for wilderness rites of passage quests for elder people. She created a "vision board" in which she utilized her substantial artistic talents to put her intentions out into the universe. She joyfully shared the elements of the vision board with me and allowed me to take a picture of it with my phone camera. I have included the picture as Figure 4 below.



*Figure 4. Soul Dancer's vision board.*

*Intuitive impressions of Soul Dancer's story.* Soul Dancer understands and, it seems to me, has integrated the experience of the wilderness rites of passage quest very well. She identified her feminine aspects with the Soul part of her. She believes these parts to be conservative and thoughtful. The male parts represented by Dancer she identifies as carefree and impetuous. She also discussed the elements of marketing and earning a living by providing opportunities for spiritual growth as masculine traits with which she is not yet comfortable. She bravely undertakes these male-oriented tasks and gives herself the benefit of not doing more than her age and “slow behavior” allow.

She willingly, but very thoughtfully, accepted another carefree, impetuous part of herself into her self-definition, so long as she did not have to disavow the conservative, thoughtful part of herself. The parts of herself had to accommodate each other—had to dance together. Her courage in putting her vision into the universe and attempting to do all within the aging limits of her powers inspired me.

I noticed that, notwithstanding the fact that the center Soul Dancer seeks may be in the middle of the third largest metropolitan area in the world, nature features prominently in her vision board. An insight she provided me was that Nature exists in places other than the wilderness—for example, it exists in a not-so-subtle way in hospitals. On my wilderness quest with Soul Dancer's data, I journeyed and imagined that, when I met and talked with Soul Dancer, I was in the presence of greatness—it seems to me that, to a very healthy extent, Soul Dancer knows she is that greatness. Once again, I was impressed with the beauty of the human being whom this study allowed me really to witness.

Personal themes for Soul Dancer include Context—ready for next phase of life; Experiences—self-acceptance by recognizing parts of herself; and Transformation—sense of

purpose in working with elders.

*Spearman.* Spearman and I met at a coffee shop near his home early on a Sunday morning. We were in a secluded portion of the shop and began the session with some rattling. He presented me with a book he had published about overcoming addictions. He shared with me that he had overcome drug addictions in his own life and has had experience helping others overcome their addictions.

He related a story of being called to participate in a vision quest of his own while driving on Hole in the Rock Road in Escalante Grand Staircase National Monument. The context of his life in which he made the decision to participate in the wilderness rites of passage quest exhibited as the theme of searching for meaning. He described it in this way: “This search for meaning was about . . . what my beliefs and agreement I had about the world.” At the time, he struggled with his addiction recovery, which left him feeling dissociated and without spiritual connection. He related that, “I heard specifically a voice that said, you know, come, you know, come and be here, come be here.” He stopped the car at that point and got out of the car. He wandered a little “around to just sort of feel the area.” A year later he returned, by himself, and spent several days fasting and wandering around the area in his own, self-guided wilderness rites of passage quest.

Spearman’s related experiences on his wilderness rites of passage quest demonstrated a strong connection with Nature. Spearman told of an experience in which he felt guided to a certain location where he discovered an ancient spear made of stone. He felt guided by Nature to the discovery. He said, “I felt like I was being pulled in a direction.” He took the spear, but later felt he was not meant to keep it, and he gave it to a Native American friend of his. His recital of the message he received from this experience related more to the experience of being guided than to the experience of finding something. He said,

But if I would just stop in that moment, and I would listen to the Earth, and I would allow it to speak and to communicate to me, through me, that everything that I believed, everything that I worried about, every struggle, everything in my life of being disconnected, being disassociated from some sense of connection, higher power, spiritual, Great Spirit, spiritual identity that I call now the spiritual ocean, was possible.

His description of the transformation he underwent as a result of his quest experiences demonstrated a serenity with life. He explained that he feels as though he felt he “was going to be okay no matter what happens.” Spearman described that his life has been changed by this experience, because he no longer fears death. He described the impact:

Losing or detaching or releasing any fear associated with what death is came out of this. Realizing that no matter what happened to me in the world that I was going to be okay . . . I could always in any moment I chose to do so—I could go back and reconnect with the Earth and that there were many ways to do it.

So Spearman’s context of a search for meaning resulted in a psycho-spiritual transformation of gaining serenity. In the process, he found a spear, through a connection with Nature, that he gave away. It does not appear that he attached a lot of meaning to the spear; the search and being guided were the more meaningful elements. As long as Nature guides him, he feels serenity.

*Intuitive impressions of Spearman’s story.* Spearman seemed quite nervous at the beginning of the interview, but clearly calmed down, became more grounded and authentic, as it proceeded. He expressed a self-awareness of a continuing addiction—an addiction to ideas. I returned time and time again to this phrase as I contemplated my encounter with Spearman during my wilderness quest with his interview data. On a shamanic journey I imagined that Spearman set out in search for the alchemical Philosopher’s Stone. He experienced a miraculous guidance to the Stone—an ancient object of value hidden in plain view in a vast landscape of human existence. When he discovered the Stone, he found, as had others before him, that the journey, not the destination, provided him the most insight into that which he sought. Upon

reflection, on my shamanic journey, I realized that, in fact, Spearman gave away the spear, but retained a memory of the journey. Like an alchemist, Spearman discovered that the process of refinement of lead to gold, the journey, possesses more value than the gold itself. Spearman was blessed with a great gift of being guided during his journey—he claimed that the memory of the journey relieves him of the fear of death. The gift from his trek was not an idea; it was a sense of connection to the Earth. It was not the *idea* of being connected to the Earth, but rather, in fact, actually being connected to the Earth. I imagine that, if this feeling Spearman experienced receives nourishment from his attention and is not converted to the state of an idea, it will long be a powerful guide in his life. Spearman selected a depiction of a multi-colored butterfly, a symbol of beauty and transformation, as his Fool card picture. I sensed that his selection of the butterfly and his description, “I love the idea of the transformation of the butterfly . . . look I’m just a caterpillar, but, hey, look at me now,” signifies the extent to which he himself has transformed as a result of his experience during his wilderness rites of passage quest. Spearman allowed me to see a flash of his alchemical “gold,” although, I admit, I had first seen only his “lead.” Spearman’s story left me wondering about Maslow’s (1987) comment regarding whether the “overdomesticated, caged, and trained” (p. 159) “lead” version or the self-actualized “gold” version of humans ought to be the model for the species.

Personal themes for Spearman include Context—searching for meaning in beliefs and contracts with life; Experiences—connection with Nature by feeling guided by Nature; and Transformation—serenity of knowing that, whatever happens, he is okay.

*Spider Woman.* I met with Spider Woman at Green Lakes Park in Seattle, Washington, which is near to her home. We were able to find a private and peaceful spot in a clearing surrounded by trees on a hillside. She brought a small wolf wind chime, which she presented to

me as a gift, to introduce herself. She said the wolf is and has been for some time an important spirit guide for her. The wolf on the chime is howling and she said that reminds her of the coyotes that howled during her wilderness rites of passage quest.

Spider Woman decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest because she was at a crossroads in her career and had to make some choices about which way to go. Her life was in turmoil—“Everything had been uprooted”—at the time she decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest. She referred to the myriad events that had created the turmoil, but related how, in the midst of it all, she had heard the call to quest. She was hopeful that she would receive some direction regarding these choices. She feels that, while on the quest, she received the message “from Great Spirit or Nature . . . that it didn’t matter what path I took because it was my being that was important.”

Spider Woman’s disclosure of the experiences of her wilderness rites of passage quest demonstrated a connection with Nature and Nature as a teacher. She connected with Nature by talking to a rock, the wind, and a tarantula. These talks all taught her that she is continually connected with Nature and that she has a place on Earth and a destiny in time. The rock told her “You are a part of eternity, just like me.” She discussed her displeasure in regard to the wind and heard it reply to her, “I have a job to do and a purpose to fulfill. As with your purpose, you’ll not always make everyone happy either.” She connected with the wind, an element of Nature, and Nature taught her more about her own purpose. The tarantula gave her the name of Piece Weaver. At first she thought the name was Peace Weaver but it later came to her that she possesses a facility at bringing people and ideas together in unique ways and that her name is meant to imply that she weaves pieces together. She explained the meaning of the name, which enforced her sense of purpose, as, “like that idea of being a union or a bridge between elements

and concepts and people and places and ideas.”

She related that she had undergone the transformation that she experiences as feeling that “now I have this sense, that doesn’t go away, that I am always right where I am supposed to be.” This quote illustrates the sense of serenity that presents itself in Spider Woman’s story of her transformation resulting from her wilderness rites of passage quest. She confided that her life had been changed by the experience: that she now always feels in the right place because she is more grounded in Nature, with the Earth, and with other people. Interestingly, once again, it appears that the context of what was happening in her life, namely, the “uprooted” turmoil, was answered by the psycho-spiritual transformation experienced: a sense of being in the right place.

*Intuitive impressions of Spider Woman’s story.* I noticed during the interview with Spider Woman that she is very much in tune with Nature. The crows often seemed to bear witness to her account and her insights. I noticed as she shared her conversation with the tarantula that a daddy-longlegs spider crawled up her arm undetected by her. It felt to me that Nature provided confirmation to Spider Woman’s story with this spider’s presence. I also had the impression, when I considered the data, that the rock, the wind, the spider were all fears that had affected Spider Woman’s peace of mind while on her quest and that her ability to make peace with each one of them provided a testimony to the legitimacy of her name, Piece Weaver. I also wondered why there needs to be any distinction between “piece” and “peace,” feeling that perhaps the name the tarantula bestowed upon her means both. I imagined that the pieces she wove together during this quest, however, were aspects of herself: her solidity, her changeability, and her ability to balance or dance through the intricacies of life. During a shamanic journey, I imagined I talked with the spider, an exceptionally huge tarantula. She told me of her feminine power, the ability to create, and her adeptness with balance. I wondered if she remembered talking to Spider

Woman. I imagined the tarantula showing Spider Woman that love is the web of her life. I wondered if Spider Woman can spin her web not only to bring things, people, and ideas together, as she said, but also to join the various aspects of herself into one piece, a Piece Weaver. Spider Woman left me grateful to have met a woman so powerful and beautiful and important to Nature that Nature had spoken to her.

Personal themes for Spider Woman include Context—life in turmoil, everything uprooted; Experiences—connection with Nature by interaction with non-human beings and the feeling of unity, Nature as a teacher through a tarantula and the wind; and Transformation—sense of serenity in knowing she is right where she is supposed to be.

*Stillwater.* Stillwater and I met in his backyard around a crackling fire on a relatively cool Utah summer evening. Throughout the interview, one or the other of us would get up to throw some wood onto the fire. When I asked him if he had some totem to share with me, he said that the fire, the trees around the fire, and the firewood, which he had ceremoniously marked, provided the introduction. We drummed for a while and the space felt sacred and peaceful. Stillwater told me he is a recovering alcoholic. I noticed he used only a few thoughtful, well-chosen words and was comfortable with long periods of silence. During our interview, more than a minute passed several times with no one speaking. He impressed me with the degree of wisdom and perspective he possessed, for someone so young.

The context in which Stillwater found himself when deciding whether to quest was that he was done with being miserable and was looking for direction. He stated clearly, “I was just looking for direction.” He performed his first wilderness rites of passage quest almost 2 years ago, in a canyon in southeastern Utah. It was shortly after he had completed an addiction treatment, and he had just met a woman to whom he was very attracted. He had been alone for

several years and was seeking an answer as to whether or not to become involved with this woman. The way he stated the question was, “And as much as I loved her, I didn’t know if it was what I was supposed to do. I was using it [the wilderness rites of passage quest] as a time to find out where I was supposed to go.”

Of the experiences Stillwater related about his wilderness rites of passage quest, a connection with Nature stood out as extremely important to him. He said that part of his experience was “realizing that . . . everything is part of Nature.” He cited several experiences with this connection, for example, a connection with the howling coyotes and interacting with a lizard. He relates a story of experiencing communication with Nature in a way that he had never before experienced. He developed an ability to listen to the non-word communications of Nature, although he felt that Nature had to try hard, almost violently, to get him to hear. He laughed with Nature at his own naivety. He told me the Wind answered his question about his woman friend; they are still together. However, when I asked him what experience during his wilderness rites of passage quest changed his life, he related an incident of falling asleep on a rock and awakening to find a lizard sleeping on his stomach. He referred to it as a “sunbathing sandwich there. The rock was getting it, and I was getting it and the lizard was getting it.”

Stillwater described the psycho-spiritual transformation resulting from his quest as a sense of serenity. He said he now experiences stillness and has “an overall sense that it’s going to be okay.” His transformation seems suited to the context of his deciding to quest. Stillwater related that he has changed because he can, at anytime, tap into his Stillwater personality. Stillwater describes it as “I can go into myself and say we need to be Stillwater about this business here, you now, stop freaking out, [pre-wilderness rites of passage quest personality] because [he] still get’s lost in himself quite a bit. Stillwater sees the big picture.” He describes

how he finds more contentment in his work, that others find him more approachable, and that he appreciates much more the beauty of those human beings with whom he comes into contact.

He selected the Fool card picture depicting a wanderer. Stillwater described the wanderer as how he would like to picture himself: “He’s out there with his sticks and dog, got his balls on his stick, and he’s ready to do whatever. He seems to be approaching it all in peace, of course, with the white rose. I guess it’s how I’d like to picture myself.”

*Intuitive impressions of Stillwater’s story.* Stillwater exhibited the essence of his name when we met together. He seemed very calm and deep. We sat, for long periods, perfectly still. His calming influence palpably affected me. Before the wilderness rite of passage, Stillwater had reached a point in his life at which he did not love himself and, therefore, could not love anyone or anything else. He talks about being celibate for 4 years, about not being sure he wanted to live, and about trying to be unconscious as much as possible. I wondered if some powerful force within Stillwater led him to seek rehabilitation treatment and then to seek something more. His story of breaking up pieces of wood by smashing the wood with large rocks during his vision quest caused me to imagine him smashing his own life, his own love, with the rocks of indifference and self-hatred. However, just as he had during the quest, he tired of that game and took some time to be still and bask in the love of the sun. This metaphor continued as I listened to Stillwater speak of his respect and love for the trees and even for the wood he threw on the fire during the interview. While thinking of Stillwater during my wilderness quest with his interview responses, I felt impressed that he loves the fire as an alchemical release of the sun’s love embedded in the wood. I imagined that he felt that love and shared it with Earth and her creatures. This release is symbolic of his own love that he has released into the world. I wondered how it felt for him: to love himself more, to love the woman he met just before the

quest with whom he still lives, and to love the people around him. He commented on how others perceive him as approachable. I supposed that they approach him because of his ability to connect to the calming influence of “Stillwater” within him.

Interestingly, although Stillwater has begun the process of integrating the person he felt he became on his quest, he still refers to “Stillwater” in the third person. I wondered about how the dance between the Stillwater part and the other parts of himself will play out over time and whether he will recognize that he is Stillwater or that Stillwater is he.

Personal themes for Stillwater include Context—done with being miserable; Experiences—connection with Nature through sense of unity and interacting with non-human beings; and Transformation—serenity in knowing everything is going to be okay.

*Thinker.* I met Thinker, 58, at his home in Durham, North Carolina. We sat out on the back porch. His dog and cat joined us as we listened to the birds, watched the morning become the day, rattled in the directions, and opened sacred space. Thinker possesses a very keen intellect and a searching curiosity about psychology. He made frequent references to Jungian literature in relating his story and seemed seriously to have contemplated the process of wilderness rites of passage quests.

The context of Thinker’s life when he decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest was marital upheaval. The context caused him “to take stock of and change my relationship with myself.” His wife had quested before, and, in the interest of trying to salvage his marriage, he agreed that it might be a good thing for him to undertake a quest. When prompted by my questions as to whether he thought he would ever have done a quest if he had not be encouraged to do so by his wife, he answered, in his thoughtful way, that he believed there was a part of him that had been forced into the “back seat” while he pursued his vocation,

and that part was not willing to stay in the back seat forever. And when I reached a certain point—and that’s probably a combination of things, but probably most importantly, that part of me was tired of sitting in the back and saying, “Okay, there’s more here than this and you need to learn about it.”

Thinker described the experience of “getting comfortable with being lost and what that means” during his wilderness rites of passage quest. He experienced Nature as a teacher when he discovered it was okay to be lost. He got lost once on the mountain during his wilderness rites of passage quest. By his own admission, he did all of the things one receives instructions not to do in a mountain wilderness: he was not under shelter during a storm, he got wet, and he wandered when he knew he was lost. Thinker ended up spending three long cold hours on the mountainside in the dark.

He transformed, as a result of his quest, into a person who is “much more openhearted . . . much more in touch with my emotions.” Thinker expressed that this experience taught him to “have a much greater sense of the bigness of the world and the smallness of me and vice-a-versa.” He selected the picture labeled Potential from among the Fool card pictures.

Thinker also shared with me a shadow side of wilderness rites of passage work that I appreciated. He spoke of meeting with several wilderness rites of passage guides before he had undertaken his own quest. In these meetings, he had sensed a cliquishness, or even arrogance, from them. He felt they exhibited superiority over those who had yet to engage in a wilderness rites of passage quest.

*Intuitive impressions of Thinker’s story.* Thinker may be one of the most intelligent people I have ever met. I reaped the benefit of his having shone the bright light of his intellect on the subject of wilderness rites of passage. I enjoyed the intellectual exchange very much. His experience of becoming lost illustrates to me that intellect does not always supply the requisite ability to deal with all situations. Thinker, notwithstanding superior intellect, became lost. No

amount of thinking provided relief. In fact, thinking may have added to the fear and panic of being lost. When Thinker finally gave himself over to the situation and just sat and waited, his guide found him. In the writing about the experience that Thinker shared with me, he expressed concern about what his guide thought about him when he finally found Thinker on the mountainside.

Thinker's experience did impact him; I felt that it shifted him from a head-centered approach to a more feeling approach to life in general. He admits to being more "open-hearted" and more "in touch with his emotions" as a result of the experience. I felt in my body the truthfulness of these statements. However, I had the very strong feeling (starting in my throat and moving to my heart, that the message I felt at the time was that Thinker has a hard time swallowing his experience), that Thinker has intellectualized the experience to a large degree. In the quote cited above, Thinker states that he has spent a lot of time with the "idea of being lost." He remembers the "idea of being lost" but not the feeling of being lost. Thinker has done several quests since this first one and continues to seek what the part of him that has been stuck in the back seat wants. I applaud his efforts and commend his persistence, but I wonder if he struggles along that longest of paths from the head to the heart.

Even in his selection of the Potential Fool card picture, Thinker was drawn to the words, "I am the unlearned, and you can learn from me" more than to the symbolism referenced by others who selected that card. He spoke of how he believes he has something to teach and that people he respects have listened to him. He definitely has something to teach and I learned a great deal from him. However, I sensed that my interaction with him seemed quite confined to the head. I sincerely enjoyed the time I spent with Thinker, but I did not feel we succeeded in connecting at a heart level.

I understand Thinker's complaint about the shadow side of wilderness rites of passage work. I have the privilege of knowing many guides who have served and several who still serve as such for years. It is demanding work, and not many are able to do it for more than a few years. They have heard many, many stories and witness, on a weekly basis, events that change people's lives for a lifetime. Just bearing witness to such rebirth trauma is draining. Those who survive for a long period of time as guides must develop a perspective that can sustain them. This perspective may be viewed or experienced by some as arrogance. Notwithstanding this apparent apology for the behavior of others, I think Thinker's experience does provide some intuitive insight about him. Wilderness rites of passage guides, in particular, value the subtle messages of the conscious and unconscious as avenues for human progress. Thinker has made his livelihood and spent much of his life valuing the logical messages of his substantial conscious intellect. The two ways of knowing are not mutually exclusive, but it does make sense to me that people who place different values on different ways of knowing may not mix well. I wondered if Thinker's discomfort with wilderness rites of passage guides may be, in reality, a reflection of his discomfort with the ways of knowing that he has yet to embrace and that they value.

Personal themes for Thinker include Context—marital upheaval; Experiences—Nature as a teacher through a metaphor of becoming lost; and Transformation—authentic self who is openhearted.

I now include a brief introduction to my own wilderness rites of passage experience (detailed in the prologue to this study) and my intuitive response to my story related as if I were a participant who had been interviewed. Such an introduction discloses to the reader, for his own assessment, the context of my personal experience as I intuitively inquire into that of others.

I chose the pseudonym of Re-searcher for myself, just as I chose pseudonyms for the

other participants, through an unforced intuitive process. Re-searcher, to me, means someone who is continuing to search over and over again. The idea is derived from Romanynshyn's (2007) *The Wounded Researcher: Research With Soul in Mind*. This study certainly represents a re-searching of what it means to set my people free.

*Re-searcher.* In the preface to this dissertation, I relate in some detail the experience that caused a transformation of my life during that quest. The context in which I decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest was the turmoil of my life at the time. I needed direction to calm the turmoil. In short, I decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest because my professional life became embroiled in legal turmoil, my community deserted me, and my whole value system was thrown into question.

My story of my wilderness rites of passage quest reveals that I felt a connection with Nature: (a) I talked with Great Tree, a wise and aged piñon pine who constantly instructed me during my solo quest; (b) a black bear walked through my camp late one night, smelled my fear, and left me alone; and (c) the rocks showed me the faces of freedom fighters. I also experienced self-acceptance: someone, who I now know to be me, recognized my imprisonment and the restrictions that imprisonment caused my people and told me to set my people free. I accepted the message before I accepted the messenger.

My psycho-spiritual transformation, which I attribute to the experiences of my wilderness rites of passage experiences, was an understanding that I had to be my self, free from the multitude of prisons in which I had allowed myself to be captured. I decided to leave my church and its restrictive ways of thinking. My wife and my six children all decided to do the same. I feel that I have set that level of my people free. I feel also that I have more "people" to set free. As the re-search of this study has revealed to me, those more "people" are, in fact, parts of me

that need to be freed and accepted by me. Once again, the transformation appears to serve as an appropriate answer to the context in which it was sought.

*Intuitive impressions of Re-searcher's story.* It seems to me to be a truism that one cannot see one's own psychology. Nevertheless, I see much of myself in each of the wonderful people who volunteered to be interviewed for this study. I have come to believe over the course of this study that I always knew I had to be free and set my people free of the prisons I had entered in my life. The voice that I heard was, in fact, my own voice. I have called it my soul, my daimon, or some "other," but, in fact, it was me. I failed to see my own power; I did not think myself worthy of love, my own or anyone else's. However, in that moment on the wilderness rites of passage quest, my own power and love broke through my egoic mind and brought to my attention something I already knew but was refusing to hear. Only recently have I realized that the "people" calling to be set free are the other parts of myself I have refused to recognize—like the name I refused to hear, over and over. The name, I refused to hear.

Personal themes for Re-searcher include Context—life in turmoil; Experiences—connection with Nature through interaction with non-human beings, self-acceptance through recognizing parts of myself, Nature as a teacher through a metaphor of freedom fighter faces in the rocks; and Transformation—authentic self who is free and setting other parts of himself free.

#### *Thematic Content Analysis of Group Themes*

The balance of this chapter highlights the results of a thematic content analysis performed across the responses of all of the participants. As I more fully describe in chapter 3, I electronically highlighted the descriptions in the transcripts of the interview that were relevant to the questions asked in this study. The criterion I used for determining their relevance was whether the description related to (a) the context of the participant's life when, and the reason

why she decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest; (b) an experience during a wilderness rites of passage quest; (c) the psycho-spiritual transformation the participants attributed to the wilderness rites of passage experiences; or (d) shadow aspects of the participants' experiences regarding their wilderness rites of passage quests. From these highlighted descriptions, I identified each distinct unit of meaning of each interview transcript. Finally, I sorted and re-sorted these units of meaning into the categories I identify below.

*Summary of the Theme of Participants' Life Context When Deciding to Quest*

When I asked the participants the planned question: Please tell me what was going on in your life at the time of the experience, in one of the most interesting findings of this study, I received answers that all had the theme of a call to change.

*Call to change.* All of the participants found themselves in periods of transition in their lives, changing from one stage to the next, when they decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest. Some cited lives in turmoil or crisis, a status necessitating change, as the context in which they decided to go and others mentioned that they wanted something to change in their lives. Other questers sought change because they had lost interest in life, had hungers not fed, were ready for the next phase of life, wanted to end misery through the search for a path, were searching for meaning, or felt something was missing in their lives. Some participants (Ancient Tree, Spider Woman, Dreamer, Thinker, and Re-searcher) cited lives in turmoil or crisis as the context in which they decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest in search of change. Four participants (Climber, Lioness, Soul Dancer, and Stillwater) mentioned that they wanted something to change in their lives as the context of their deciding to participate in quests. The other 4 participants (Earth Child, He Bear, She Bear, and Spearman) all presented the search

for meaning as the contexts in which they sought change and decided to engage in a quest.

In addition to the question of what was going on in their lives at the time they decided to quest, I specifically asked each participant why s/he had decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage quest. The reasons the participants stated supported the theme of a call to change. Many participants cited the search for meaning in life as the change they sought in embarking on a wilderness rites of passage quest. Thinker decided the time had arrived to take stock of his life. Earth Child responded to an urge that pulled her. Soul Dancer felt she had completed one phase of life and was ready to move on to the next. She Bear went because the opportunity showed up while she was looking for a path. Spearman answered the call of voices beckoning him while he was searching for meaning. He Bear went on the quest because “something was missing. A piece was missing.”

Some participants cited seeking direction in their lives as the change they sought. Dreamer said, “I felt I had no direction, no guidance.” Ancient Tree expressed that he “wanted to have done what I was supposed to do. And I didn’t know for sure what that was.” Stillwater stated that he “was just looking for direction.” Climber said that her script had run out (appendix L, lines 129-130). I wrote at the time of my quest, “I feel that now is a good time to figure out what I want to do with the rest of my life.”

Two of the participants decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest because they wanted change in their current situations. Lioness wanted badly for things to change. Spider Woman needed grounding because everything had been uprooted.

*Movement toward integration.* Regardless of the words used by the participant, the need for a change in his life emerged as the overwhelming theme of the psycho-spiritual need evident in the context of the participants’ lives upon launching into a wilderness rites of passage quest.

As discussed later in this chapter, in most cases, this change turned out to involve a movement toward synthesis, or the integration, of heretofore unrecognized parts of themselves into their self-concepts. Several of the participants (Ancient Tree, He Bear, Re-searcher, She Bear, and Spearman) clearly demonstrated such a need. Others' needs, such as Climber's need to be seen, relate closely to a need for self-actualization. As another example, Earth Child's and Soul Dancer's need to be free to be themselves reflects a need to embrace all parts of themselves. Lioness's need to define herself reflects a need to accept herself enough not to let herself be defined by others. Dreamer and Spider Woman both needed reassurance that they are sufficient, that they provide meaningful service to the world. Thinker needed to get out of his head and get in touch with his feelings; he logically loved and respected himself, and he sought change to feel that love and respect in his heart.

*Summary of Themes of Participants' Experiences During Wilderness Rites of Passage Quests*

When I asked the participants the question, Please tell me, in your own words, about your transformative wilderness rites of passage experience, they related experiences from which emerged these common themes: feeling connected with Nature, Nature as a teacher, self-acceptance, and shift in awareness.

*Connected with Nature.* Most of the participants described several experiences of feeling connected with Nature in one or more of three different ways: feeling connected with Nature as a sense of fitting into or being a part of Nature, feeling connected with Nature through interaction or relationship with other-than-human beings, and feeling connected with Nature by being guided by Nature.

Several of these experiences of feeling connected with Nature were described as understanding that one is "part of all of this" (He Bear), "part of eternity" (Spider Woman), "in a

solid place in the universe” (Lioness), “at home on Earth” (Earth Child) , or “part of Nature” (Stillwater). Some participants mentioned experiences that caused them to feel connected with Nature when it responded to their inner emotions: Climber described a windstorm that appeared “almost as if [she] had conjured it up” (line 89) and Lioness described a wind that swirled around her as birds and insects joined with her in her rejoicing.

Other experiences involved interactions with nonhuman creatures: Stillwater described interactions with a lizard sleeping on his stomach and with the coyotes howling at night that helped him feel connected, He Bear spoke of becoming comfortable with the presence of a bear through his connection with other animals, and I experienced an acceptance of my place in Nature when a black bear prowled through my solo camp late one evening. Climber also related two separate experiences of feeling connected with Nature when she felt “seen” by Nature: Once when she stood naked on the side of the mountain and once when a mother bear turned to look back at her.

Participants described experiences of connecting with Nature by feeling guided by Nature: Ancient Tree felt guided to his solo spot by a bug and Spearman felt guided to his spear, with a thistle plant providing the final prod. Spearman suggests that his experience of voices inviting him to return to conduct of wilderness rites of passage quests made him feel connected with Nature.

*Shift in awareness.* Questers experienced a shift in awareness when they suddenly shifted from a state of questioning to a state of understanding. A shift in awareness, as used in this context, has three different attributes: (a) a shift in intellectual knowledge—from not-knowing to knowing; (b) a shift in emotions—a shift from normal emotion to a feeling of elation; and (c) a shift in state of being—from reality to another realm.

A shift from not knowing to knowing is illustrated by Dreamer's reported experience that, when he saw a cloud formation in the shape of his spiritual teacher, he had "this deep, deep knowing that I hadn't been abandoned."

A shift from normal emotions to elation is illustrated by Dreamer's report that, at one point when he finally gave up an internal struggle during his wilderness rites of passage quest, "all of a sudden a wonderful peace came on me." Again, He Bear reported that, as he sat contemplating the beauty that surrounded him during his wilderness rites of passage quest, "a feeling came over me of just bliss, joy and bliss."

An example of the shift in dimensions of reality is He Bear's report of an experience of "feeling the shift" in his state of consciousness when he crossed the threshold to enter upon the solo portion of his wilderness rite of passage "as though I was in another dimension."

*Self-acceptance.* The participants related several experiences occurring during their wilderness rites of passage quests as involving self-acceptance. Most of these events involved the recognition of previously unrecognized parts of the self. Lioness described two separate experiences of recognizing the crybaby part of her and nurturing and accepting it. Soul Dancer also experienced two events of recognizing and accepting parts of herself, the dancer and the salesman parts of herself. She Bear described recognizing that the bear she feared was the "furry blanket of people who love me" part of herself. As Re-searcher, I now recognize that I met the freedom-loving part of me on my wilderness rites of passage quest and that I am integrating it into myself. Dreamer described two experiences, both dreams, that aided his self-acceptance: he saw, in a dream, many gifts that would be his "when the time is right," and he argued with his mother, in another dream, about his commitment to being a wilderness rites of passage guide leaving him with a "dynamic of dealing with both of those voices . . . for 30 years." His self-

acceptance increased with understanding that he has yet to integrate all of his gifts and that a dynamic of voices he experiences are those of parts of him.

*Nature as a teacher.* Most of the participants experienced the sense that Nature was teaching them. This theme has two subthemes: Nature teaching through metaphors and Nature teaching by instilling a sense of purpose.

Some of the participants reported experiences of Nature as a teacher through metaphors during their wilderness rites of passage quests. Climber learned clarity in her thinking by standing on a mountain where she could “see everything.” A lizard also taught Climber that, since he can exist without a tail, she can exist without her tale, so she learned to let go of her story. She Bear learned she could drop a lot of the excess baggage she carries with her everyday when Nature taught her that she carried too much baggage to her solo spot. Thinker became lost and learned that he could be okay with not knowing where he was or where he was going all of the time. I saw the faces of freedom fighters in the rocks and learned that I, too, must seek freedom.

Other participants reported experiencing Nature teaching them a sense of life purpose during their wilderness rites of passage quest. Spider Woman related a talk with the wind and a talk with a tarantula spider. The wind told her that she had a “job to do and a purpose to fulfill” and the tarantula gave her a name, Piece Weaver, and told her she would be instrumental in “being a union or a bridge between elements and concepts and people and places and ideas.” Ancient Tree reported a discussion with a piece of petrified wood that told him, “The things that you will do will have an effect on the world that will last for longer than I have been around.”

The experiences of the questers during their wilderness rites of passage quests were widely varied, but, whether they involved the theme of connecting to Nature, Nature as a teacher,

shift in awareness, or self-acceptance, they invariably served as a catalyst, in some unique and personal way, to their answers to the calls for change that the participants took with them to the wilderness.

### *Summary of Themes of Participants' Transformations*

When I asked the participants how the experiences they told me about propel them toward psycho-spiritual transformation in their lives, all of the participants claimed to have experienced major psycho-spiritual transformations that related to the development of the concept of self. As the primary transformation they experienced, some cited the integration of different aspects of their selves discovered during their quests. These integration processes presented the subthemes of (a) feeling more authentic or whole, (b) discovering a purpose in life, and (c) serenely embracing the vagaries of life's fortunes. Each participant reported a primary transformation that related to one of these three sub-themes.

Additionally, however, most participants also expressed elements of transformation they experienced that related to at least one of the other themes. For example, Soul Dancer expressed her primary transformation as a sense of life purpose: "It [the wilderness rites of passage experience] made it very clear that my work is with elders." However, she also experienced "coming to the understanding of the need to marry both halves of myself," which represented embracing her different aspects of herself: becoming more authentic. Furthermore, she also reported, "I don't really want blue skies, because they are not realistic, but I want to be able to balance what happens between blue skies and the difficult situations," which realization illustrated the transformation of serenity that she also experienced.

*Authentic self.* Several of the participants reported that the primary psycho-spiritual transformation was that they had discovered and integrated an aspect of themselves that they

believed made them more whole, more complete. Lioness said, “I feel fearless. I feel like now I have the courage and strength of character to do what needs to be done.” Thinker stated that he feels “much more openhearted . . . much more in touch with my emotions.” He Bear said he feels he “reconnected me to my authentic self.” I, as Re-searcher, feel that I am freer to be me. Climber feels she has the “courage that it takes to stand up and be visible when you feel that you are not.” Earth Child feels she knows who she is and that she is at “home” in the Earth. She said, “It’s who I am.”

*Sense of serenity and peace.* Some of the participants reported that they primarily transformed in that they found serenity and an ability to accept the challenges of life. She Bear reported that she now can accept “things that have shown themselves to be hardships or trials” and “look at them as a gift.” Spearman said that he now believes that “I’m going to be okay no matter what happens.” Stillwater reported that he now has “an overall sense that it’s going to be okay.” And Spiderwoman related, “now I have this sense that doesn’t go away that I am always right where I am supposed to be.”

*Sense of purpose.* A few participants related that the primary transformation that resulted from their wilderness rites of passage experiences was a sense of purpose to their lives. Ancient Tree reported, “The way my life has changed is: I am so fucking excited about it.” He went on to relate that, in his work as a landscaper, he feels he is fulfilling his life’s purpose. Dreamer reported that, “I have done the best that I can. There is this larger unfolding happening through me. My soul is guiding me,” a profound and moving statement of a sense of life purpose. Soul Dancer, as cited above, referenced a clear direction to work with elders, which she does, and which she has visions of continuing to do.

In the instance of each participant, the psycho-spiritual call to change was answered by

the wilderness rites of passage quest. All participants are at different stages of integrating the transformation into their lives. In each case, although the participant may not be totally aware of the transformation and its integration, I had a strong feeling that s/he was in the process of integrating and living the transformation I felt s/he had experienced.

Furthermore, it appears that, at some deep level of unconsciousness within each participant, she knew exactly what her own psycho-spiritual call to change was, and—through her own incredible power and the catalyst of a connection with Nature, Nature as a teacher, her own self-acceptance, or her shift in awareness—she caused the message to be delivered in a dramatic way, so that the necessary transformation to accomplish that psycho-spiritual change could be brought to her own consciousness. As the message was integrated into the life of each, the wilderness rites of passage participant gained a self-conception as an authentic self, serene with the vagaries of life and confident of a meaningful purpose in life.

## Chapter 5: Transforming and Refining the Lenses

Chapter 5 describes Cycle 4 of this Intuitive Inquiry, the transformation and refinement of my preliminary lenses identified in Cycle 2, and the development of some new lenses. I first present my preliminary lenses, then I briefly describe the intuitive process I experienced in approaching each of these preliminary lenses with fresh eyes (and a fresh heart) to determine whether the data collected during Cycle 3 required me to reorganize, refute, or expand those lenses. Next, I list all of my refined and transformed lenses. Then I describe in more detail how these lenses were derived from preliminary lenses by becoming strengthened, expanded, or changed by the data and how several new lenses were developed. I conclude the chapter with a synthesis, in the form of a fictional story, of the themes resulting from the thematic content analysis and the newly constituted lenses resulting from the process presented in this chapter. The information in this chapter allows the reader to access my intuitive processes of lens refinement and transformation that is the backbone of this Intuitive Inquiry.

### *Preliminary Lenses*

Anderson (2006) suggested that the processes of transforming and refining preliminary lenses may involve several days or weeks and that the intuitive incubation of the data should not be hurried. She wrote, “My best suggestion is simply to take sufficient time to allow intuitive insights to integrate into clear expression without forcing the process willfully” (p. 26). Such was my experience. I mulled over the data I had collected and discussed it with several people who were familiar with wilderness rites of passage. I had some very powerful dreams and moments of “awakenings” during reflective meditations that I experienced as numinous verifications of the insights gained in these instances.

My 12 preliminary lenses, described in chapter 3, are presented below in table 2.

Table 2

*Preliminary Lenses Listed by Grouping Statements*


---

Humans' perceptions, understanding, and awareness are informed by their experience and the context of those experiences.

---

1. Experiences such as time in wilderness, traumatic events, and interpersonal relationships, as well as the context of those experiences, such as cultural, educational, religious, and socio-economic background, inform humans' perceptions, understandings, and awareness.
- 

In reestablishing a natural relationship with Nature, modern Western humans may achieve psycho-spiritual transformation.

---

2. In Nature, all life is interconnected; separation from Nature is unnatural.
  3. Many modern Western humans have become separated from Nature.
  4. The unnatural separation of many modern Western humans from Nature may cause them to be fearful of it.
  5. Humans may achieve psycho-spiritual transformation by returning to their natural state of interconnection with Nature.
- 

Bringing to awareness the material of the individual or the collective unconscious provides opportunity for psycho-spiritual transformation.

- 
6. Greater self-awareness can be achieved through encounters with archetypes, patterns of the collective unconscious, that may occur in Nature, dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, or mystical experiences.
  7. Greater self-awareness can be achieved through humans reflecting their unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature.
  8. Other-than-human beings in the natural world can inform awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.
  9. Mystical experiences can inform awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.
  10. Integration of awareness achieved through archetypal encounters and through reflections of unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature can promote psycho-spiritual transformation.
- 

Wilderness rites of passages experiences provide opportunities for psycho-spiritual transformation.

---

11. Meaningful rituals, such as rites of passage, create a context and evoke a state of mind that opens humans to encounters with self-reflected and archetypal material.
12. Because a modern wilderness rites of passage quest creates an environment conducive to self-reflected and archetypal encounters, it affords its participant

the opportunity to integrate such encounters and potentially experience psycho-spiritual transformation.

---

### *Process of Transforming and Refining Preliminary Lenses*

As I reviewed the data collected during Cycle 3, I noticed that certain themes and patterns surfaced. As I sat with this data and allowed intuitive insights to distill in my understanding, I found that most of my preliminary lenses required modification. I also explored new literature that validated some of the lens transformations I was experiencing and that aided in the development of some brand new lenses. As it turns out, only five of my preliminary lenses felt to me as if they were supported by the data, and four of the 12 preliminary lenses required some expansion to reflect the data accurately. Three of the lenses required either abandonment or substantial modification to fit the data. I also discovered I had developed three entirely new lenses. These final total of 15 lenses (five strengthened original lenses, four expanded original lenses, three changed original lenses, and three new lenses), listed below in table 3, now reflect my intuitive understanding of the data.

The table is arranged in the order of stages of the development of my preliminary set of lenses into the enriched perspective on the psycho-spiritual transformational potential of wilderness rites of passage quests. The groups into which these individual lenses fall at the completion of the study reflect the results—strengthened, expanded changed, and new—of the re-searching I undertook in my encounters with fellow questers whose stories revealed that they had found their individual treks to be psycho-spiritually transformational in their lives and revelatory of the connection that we humans all share with Nature.

Table 3

*Refined and Transformed Lenses Listed by Differences From Preliminary Lenses*


---

Strengthened Lenses

---

1. In Nature, all life is interconnected; separation from Nature is unnatural.
  2. Greater self-awareness can be achieved through encounters with archetypes, patterns of the collective unconscious, that may occur in Nature, dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, or mystical experiences.
  3. Greater self-awareness can be achieved through humans reflecting their unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature.
  4. Integration of awareness achieved through archetypal encounters and through reflections of unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature can promote psycho-spiritual transformation.
  5. Meaningful rituals, such as rites of passage, create a context and evoke a state of mind that opens humans to encounters with self-reflected and archetypal material.
- 

Expanded Lenses

---

6. Because the structured context of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest creates a container conducive to self-reflected and archetypal encounters in Nature, it affords its participant the opportunity to integrate such encounters and potentially to experience psycho-spiritual transformation.

7. Experiences such as time in wilderness, traumatic events, and interpersonal relationships, as well as the context of those experiences, such as cultural, educational, religious, and socio-economic background, have a broad and extensive influence on humans' perceptions, understandings, and awareness.
8. Some force, perhaps the intentions of seeking humans, calls other-than-human beings in the natural world to help inform awareness of seeking human beings at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.
9. Some force, perhaps the intentions of seeking humans, causes mystical experiences that can inform awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.

---

#### Changed Lenses

---

10. Many modern humans, although they may live in metropolitan areas, still feel a longing for their connection with Nature through nature.
11. Many modern humans, although they may live in metropolitan areas, find comfort, like a return home, when in nature.
12. Humans may achieve psycho-spiritual transformation by strengthening their interconnection with Nature.

---

## New Lenses

---

13. Human beings possess potential to transform and grow that may be beyond their imaginings. A powerful force that drives preservation and evolution within Nature is also present in human beings as an impulse toward self-preservation that compels humans to advance their own psycho-spiritual development.
  14. The context of the events in one's life that precipitates the answering of a call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest significantly influences the type of psycho-spiritual transformation that may occur as a consequence of the quest.
  15. Human beings possess an innate understanding of the transformation they require for their psycho-spiritual development to continue. They set the intention that allows them synchronistically to align with experiences in Nature to aid in that transformation.
- 

## *Refined and Transformed Lenses*

Below, I more fully describe these strengthened, expanded, changed, and new lenses and how I arrived at the particular refinement and transformation of each.

### *Strengthened Lenses*

Strengthened lenses are those that I identified as preliminary lenses and that the incubation of the data has reinforced. I have a deepened commitment to and belief in these lenses, as a result of engaging in Cycle 3 of the intuitive inquiry. Most of these lenses remained

foundational throughout the intuitive process. Unlike those that expanded or changed, they were never in question. When I dug at their bases, I found rock anchored deeply in the soil of my soul.

The first strengthened lens is “In Nature all life is interconnected; separation from Nature is unnatural.” All of the participants cited an increased feeling of connectedness to Nature and to the life encountered during their quests. For example, Climber said, “There’s a connection: You feel both you and you feel much larger than you at the same time (appendix L, lines 120-121). Dreamer recognized that “the place I had always felt the most connection with the Divine, with my wholeness, was in the natural world.” Stillwater spoke movingly about realizing that “everything is part of Nature.” Each of the others related some interaction with Nature—having been led or instructed by Nature or Her creatures.

My own experience of growing up on a farm and moving to a city influenced my thought that all city dwellers had become disconnected from nature, which I equated with being disconnected from Nature. Therefore, I was surprised when each of the participants seemed intuitively to feel an innate connection with Nature that was present for them before their quest. The experience of participating in a wilderness rites of passage quest reminded them of that connection or reinforced that connection for them. Perhaps the self-selection process of this study had inadvertently eliminated those who did not feel any connection with Nature before or during their quest. Based on the data collected in this study, a realization of and appreciation for the interconnection between human and Nature provides a necessary condition for experiencing transformation on a wilderness quest. In this regard, my lens that such a connection exists is strengthened to the point of not only recognizing the existence of the connection but also coming to a realization of its necessity for a transformational wilderness rites of passage quest.

The second strengthened lens is “Greater self-awareness can be achieved through encounters with archetypes, patterns of the collective unconscious, that may occur in Nature, dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, or mystical experiences.” Each of the participants described experiences during their wilderness rites of passage quests that involved archetypal encounters. All 13 of the participants describe altered states of consciousness during their quests. All 13 of the participants experienced archetypal encounters involving active imagination, 3 experienced archetypal dreams, and 8 experienced encounters that could be considered mystical. The line between the mystical and active imagination is thin; certainly it often involves an overlap, and perhaps the line does not even exist. While I believe that all encountered some sorts of altered states of consciousness, only one, He Bear, recognized such a state. Examples of other archetypal encounters include these reported events: Ancient Tree actively imagined a conversation with a rock; Climber mystically conjured up a storm; Dreamer, true to his name, dreamed important messages about his life’s quest and actively imagined the shape of his spiritual teacher in the clouds.

The third strengthened lens is “Greater self-awareness can be achieved through humans reflecting their unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature.” Ten of the participants recited experiences that involved an increase in self-awareness as the result of a projection of some unconscious or collective unconscious part of themselves onto an object of Nature with which they interacted. For example, Climber realized that she is powerful when she stood naked on top of the hill and conjured up a storm, Lioness felt nurtured when Nature joined in her celebration of realizing she is powerful, Dreamer embraced his life’s work when the clouds accepted him in the form of his spiritual teacher, and He Bear recognized his peaceful self in the bliss of Nature’s embrace.

The fourth strengthened lens is “Integration of awareness achieved through archetypal encounters and through reflections of unconscious and collective unconscious material onto Nature can promote psycho-spiritual transformation.” Integration cannot be achieved without the awareness attained by these questers, and, conversely, it appears from this data that awareness naturally prompted integration.

There were no examples of participants in this study becoming more self-aware and then not at least attempting to integrate that awareness. For example, Earth Child projected her own calling voice onto disembodied Nature and ended up embracing and becoming aware of the physical Earth as her grounded home. She has integrated the Earth as her home to the point that it is who she is. He Bear projected his loneliness into the vastness of the wilderness, lost the boundaries between himself and his surroundings, and became aware that he was infinitely connected to “all of this.” He integrated this awareness to transform psycho-spiritually into a reclaimed innocent who can experience the “joy and bliss” of life. Spearman projected his own longing to explore his inner wilderness onto the voices calling him to the outer wilderness, became aware of Nature’s love for him when she guided him through that outer wilderness to a treasure, and ultimately integrated that love into a serenity of his inner wilderness.

The fifth strengthened lens is “Meaningful rituals, such as rites of passage, create a context and evoke a state of mind that opens humans to encounters with self-reflected and archetypal material.” Every participant described a context or state of mind encountered during her wilderness rites of passage quest that resulted in an encounter with self-reflected or archetypal materials. The examples provided above in reference to lens 3 demonstrate self-reflected material during a wilderness rites of passage quest. Similarly, every participant described opportunities for integration presented during her wilderness rites of passage quest that

resulted in psycho-spiritual transformation. Examples of the opportunities for integration of encounters with self-projected or archetypal materials and the resulting psycho-spiritual transformations are provided in the discussion of lens 4 above.

In the instance of each of these five preliminary lenses, the data I encountered through Cycle 3 of this Intuitive Inquiry led me to believe even more strongly in these lenses. It is as if the lenses are magnified; they are now larger, as is the case with the expanded lenses discussed below. The strengthening and magnification of these lenses by the grinding forces of the data collected and examined in this study has brought a previously somewhat blurred view of the subject into sharper focus.

### *Expanded Lenses*

Expanded lenses represent those lenses that were incomplete in my original conception of them. When I questioned them in light of the new information from the interviews and related experiences, I discovered that, while I thought they had provided a clear view of the subject, they, in fact, leave something off of the edges of the subject and must be expanded to include these edges. I concluded that three of my preliminary lenses, identified in Cycle 2, are insufficient, in light of the fact that they are not large enough to allow a complete view of the subject.

The expanded sixth lens is “Because the structured context of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest creates a container conducive to self-reflected and archetypal encounters in Nature, it affords its participant the opportunity to integrate such encounters and potentially experience psycho-spiritual transformation.” This lens expanded slightly to include the concepts of the structure of a wilderness rites of passage quest and the container that structure provides. One may experience healing by going off into nature by himself; however, the structure of a

wilderness rites of passage (separation, threshold, and reincorporation) quest with a trained guide provides a container, like a cocoon (Plotkin, 2003), for transformation.

Following here are examples of the context or the state of mind provided by the wilderness rites of passage quest that presented the opportunities for encounters with self-reflected or archetypal material: Lioness, She Bear, and Soul Dancer each encountered very powerful archetypal dreams during their wilderness rites of passage quest that provided them with the opportunity to integrate fearlessness, lovability, and confidence, respectively, into their self-concepts. Spider Woman encountered, during her wilderness rites of passage quest, a huge tarantula spider, which she otherwise would not have had the fortune to meet, that imparted to her the wisdom she projected onto it. Thinker, during his wilderness rites of passage quest, was unable to use his terrific mind to solve his problem of being lost. He projected onto the experience his need to open his heart and his emotions in addition to accessing the resources of his mind. In each of these examples, and indeed in the case of each of the participants of this study, the participants integrated, or are in the process of integrating, the self-reflected and archetypal encounters that occurred for them during their vision quests, thereby experiencing psycho-spiritual transformation.

The expanded seventh lens is “Experiences such as time in wilderness, traumatic events, and interpersonal relationships, as well as the context of those experiences, such as cultural, educational, religious, and socio-economic background, have a broad and extensive influence on humans’ perceptions, understandings, and awareness.” As the data revealed, the context of the life of the participant at the time he decided to go on a wilderness rites of passage correlated with the psycho-spiritual transformation the participant attributed to the experience of the quest more than did any other factor that was examined. The experience itself provided a trigger, and that

trigger turned out to be manifested in a multitude of different events, such as talking with a rock or a spider, feeling of being seen, seeing an image in clouds, hearing a voice, feeling of joy and bliss, dreaming, feeling guided by or connected with Nature, or feeling of being lost. The trigger had little to do with the actual psycho-spiritual transformation; however, the context of the participant's life seemed to have everything to do with the transformation.

As I describe in the summary of themes of participants' transformations, every person found some resolution to her challenge, a resolution I believe was known to her at some level of consciousness before the quest and was catalyzed by an event during the quest. Therefore, a modern wilderness rites of passage quest experienced by a modern Western individual appears from the data to perform a valuable function in healing psychological problems. On the other hand, a Lakota adolescent, for example, did not have a choice as to whether to participate in a vision quest and did not necessarily have a psychological challenge (other than the transition from childhood to adulthood). He underwent a vision quest as a true rite of passage. Therefore, a modern wilderness rites of passage quest is extremely different from a Native American vision quest in this important regard. I empathize much more now with the Native American assertion that modern wilderness rites of passage are not the equivalent of a traditional vision quest. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the differences, both the traditional indigenous quests and the modern wilderness rites of passage quests call upon the same powers of Nature and human physiological and psychological structures to aid in two variant processes.

This reflection led me to conclude that, to a much greater degree than I had appreciated when identifying my preliminary lenses, I am, this study's participants are, and my readers are, influenced by our own experiences and culture. With this important fact in mind, I suggest that this lens must be expanded to permeate every idea presented in this study. I delved deeply into

the experiences of the 12 beautiful people who participated with me in this study. I came away with a love for each of them that surprised me and affected me to my core. It is true, however, that their experiences are viewed through a double fog: the fog of the acculturation of my own life as I listen and try to understand and the fog of their acculturation as they speak and try to convey. My honest readers will admit to adding a third fog of their own when reading this study. (I have combined the commentary on the evolution of the next two lenses below.)

The expanded eighth lens is “Some force, perhaps the intentions of seeking humans, calls other-than-human beings in the natural world to help inform awareness of seeking human beings at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.” The expanded ninth lens is “Some force, perhaps the intentions of seeking humans, causes mystical experiences that can inform awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level.” I have combined the discussion of lenses 8 and 9 in the discussion of lens 9 below because they are both related to a *force* that I believe is comprised of the intention of the participants.

The ancient Indian sutra of sankalpa holds that human intentions have powers that connect to all living creatures and to mystical sources. Participants in this study cited many experiences of interaction with other-than-human beings during their wilderness rites of passage. I distinguished the experience of interaction with a living being that is other-than-human, which may certainly be considered by some to be a mystical experience, from an interaction with entities not usually considered as living, which may be considered by some to be other-than-human beings. In both types of encounters, I searched for elements of information garnered from the encounter by the study’s participants and attempted to ascertain whether the participant consciously recognized the information or whether it influenced him at the conscious or

collective unconscious levels. In the case of most of their experiences, the participants received some information from the other-than-human being or mystical encounter at a conscious level but received much more information at unconscious or collective unconscious levels. I also marveled at the synchronicity of the encounters and wondered at the force behind that synchronicity.

Examples of encounters with other-than-human beings include Climber's experience of an other-than-human encounter when a bear first ignored her but then, as it was leaving, glanced back and looked at her. At a conscious level she knew the bear saw her, while, at the time she did not yet realize how, unconsciously, she craved to be seen, and that all humans at a collective unconscious level need recognition from the "Other." Lioness interacted with other-than-human beings—birds, trees and butterflies—when she celebrated psychological breakthrough (i.e., realizing she was not [only] a crybaby but was also powerful). In her altered state of consciousness, Lioness, at the time, found nothing remarkable about these other-than-human beings joining in her celebration. Upon reflection, she marveled at the interspecies communication.

Spider Woman's talk with a tarantula that gave her a new name provided one of the highlights of her wilderness rites of passage experience. She related how, at first, she had feared the spider but that she asked it if it was going to bite her and it assured her, with a laugh, that it would not. She slept in a small cave with the tarantula for three nights, peacefully coexisting, trusting, and learning wisdom from this other-than-human being.

In a manner very similar to encounters with mystical forces described below, my lens regarding the interaction of humans and other-than-human beings expanded as a result of this study. In this way is this Cycle 2 lens expanded: Not only do I now believe that other-than-

human beings inform human awareness but I also believe that a force calls the other-than-human beings to participate in a human's wilderness rites of passage quest in a meaningful manner. For example, some force caused a black bear to walk by Climber, and, because she had a psycho-spiritual need to be seen, to look back over its shoulder and see Climber. I describe below, in my discussion of new lenses, my beliefs about the nature of the force I mention here. As I suggested above, in some respects, this lens, as well as that concerning mystical experiences, is subsumed into the new lens about this force.

The participants of this study provide me with many examples of experiences that could be described as mystical and from which the participants gained awareness. For example, Climber also had the mystical experience of witnessing a storm materialize as if she had "conjured it up" (line 89). She consciously felt awed during the experience; at the time, she did not yet recognize that she had unconsciously witnessed her own magnificent power or appreciate the archetypal magician within her. Dreamer experienced a mystical encounter with the clouds wherein he consciously recognized his spiritual teacher but did not yet realize the unconscious reality that he was his own teacher, the archetypal sage/fool. Earth Child mystically heard the Earth tell her she was home. She consciously realized she belonged on the Earth but had yet to understand the unconscious message of need to feel loved, like the archetypal quest of the Orphan that stirred in collective unconscious material into which she had tapped. Both Spider Woman and Stillwater had talks with the wind. Spider Woman learned that she has a purpose to fulfill and that not everyone will be pleased by her purpose. Both of these questers told me of these conversations without pausing to consider how a modern Westernized human might view it as unusual that such communication would be considered. In both of these cases, the wind blew away the anxious concern of these 2 seekers.

I have come to believe that not only do mystical experiences inform human awareness but some force causes mystical experiences to occur at exactly the time and place that a searching human may be encountering an awareness that is necessary for her psycho-spiritual development. Furthermore, I now believe that such experiences occur more frequently than they are observed by the human at whom they are directed. A benefit of the quietude of a wilderness rites of passage quest derives from the fact that distractions, including ego chatter, are minimized, so that mystical events may be fully experienced and appreciated.

My first preliminary lens, regarding one's experiences and the context of those experiences informing humans' perceptions, understandings, and awareness, required significant expansion to emerge as the refined and transformed lens 7 that would be sufficient for the topic. Likewise, my preliminary lens regarding wilderness rites of passage quests providing an opportunity for self-reflection and archetypal encounters also needed some expansion to become the refined and transformed lens 6. My preliminary lenses regarding other-than-human beings and mystical experiences informing awareness at the conscious and unconscious levels, as well as at the collective unconscious level, required expansion into the refined and transformed lenses 8 and 9 as a result of the reconsideration I engaged in after data collection and my own intuitive process with it. I had underestimated the impact my experiences and culture, the contexts of my life, have upon my perceptions and the perceptions of the participants of this study. I had not included in my preliminary lenses the concepts of structural context and container in my understanding of the power of a wilderness rites of passage quest. Similarly, I discovered that not only do other-than-humans beings and mystical experience inform human encounters with the numinous but that some force appears to cause such beings and mystical happenings to present themselves at moments when questers are most inclined to need them.

### *Changed Lenses*

Changed lenses characterize those lenses wherein my ideas about the original lens required significant modification. My original assumptions turned out to be too limiting in the case of these lenses. The Intuitive Inquiry process caused me to question all of my lenses, and that process found these lenses lacking. They differ from the expanded lenses in that those lenses seemed to be tethered near the proper dock, whereas, the changed lenses drifted about, bumping the dock but lacking sufficient tethering or anchoring. (I have combined the discussion of the next 3 lenses below.)

The changed 10th lens is “Many modern humans, although they may live in metropolitan areas, still feel a longing for their connection with Nature. The changed 11th lens is “Many modern humans, although they may live in metropolitan areas, find comfort, like a return home, when in Nature.” The changed 12th lens is “Humans may achieve psycho-spiritual transformation by strengthening their interconnection with Nature.” I have grouped together the discussion of these three changed lenses because the same insight affected my perception of each of these lenses. The perception arose when I discovered that none of the individuals, with the exception of Earth Child, when discussing in her early life, had mentioned that they felt they had been separated from nature. To the contrary, nearly all mentioned that they had always felt close to Nature, or at home in nature.

As I mentioned above, my own experience of growing up on a farm and moving to a city influenced my thought that all city dwellers had become disconnected from nature, which I had equated with being disconnected from Nature. While I continue to believe that there may be some people who feel they have become separated from Nature, I found this sentiment to be rare among the participants of this study. I have modified this lens to support the data. I now believe

that most people have an innate feeling of connection with Nature and have within them a desire to renew that connection.

Similarly, with the exceptions of He Bear and She Bear, none of the participants I interviewed had discussed being fearful of the wilderness. He Bear and She Bear, in point of fact, did fear an aspect of nature: a bear they “believed” to exist but never saw. As discussed above, the bear they really feared in both cases was a psychological bear that blocked them from the ability to love themselves or allow others to love them. I realize that some modern humans possibly fear being in nature, but most of the participants of this study, notwithstanding the fact that they live in metropolitan areas, had no fear. Stillwater spoke of the “hounds of hell” when describing the coyotes that serenaded him each evening, but he did not specifically mention being fearful of them. I believe my own experience of intense fear when the black bear walked through my solo camp and the extreme effort on my part once again to calmly trust in Nature led me to project that others possess a similar fear of nature. The data gathered in the course of this study clearly refute my preliminary lens that most modern humans fear nature.

Since, as described here, my lens regarding modern humans’ separation from Nature no longer remains valid as based on the data collected, it follows that a return is not possible. Before one can return, one has to leave. The concept that a connection with Nature may be transformational is covered by my strengthened second preliminary lens: In Nature all life is interconnected; separation from Nature is unnatural. It is not the “return” to Nature from a state of separation from Nature that provides the possibility of transformation to the quester; rather, it is the reminder of that connection that the quester knew existed. Sometimes one feels too comfortable with a relationship, and a regeneration of that relationship can remind one of its sweetness. My preliminary lens of the benefit of a return, therefore, needs to be modified

substantially—to evolve from a return to Nature to a remembrance of one’s connection with Nature.

My three lenses regarding modern humans’ separation, fear, and return to Nature have undergone substantial change as a result of this study. The first two of these lenses are no longer extant. I do not believe modern humans necessarily feel separated from Nature or that they fear it. The last of these lenses is rendered somewhat moot, in view of the fact that, if one is not separated, one cannot return, but still maintains some value if it can be modified to read that a remembrance of one’s relationship with Nature might provide transformational opportunities to modern humans. This insight provides one of the great lessons of this study: We humans need to remember that we are, in fact, connected with Nature; we are not, despite our city dwelling lifestyles, separated from Nature, as much of the literature purports. We can fulfill our innate longing for Nature by reminding ourselves that we are at “home” with Her, where not only will we find comfort but, if we desire it, we can find the impetus for the transformation of our souls that we know we need for our continued psycho-spiritual development.

### *New Lenses*

I have identified three new lenses as a result of my research in this study.

The new 13th lens is “Human beings possess potential to transform and grow that may be beyond their imaginings. A powerful force that drives preservation and evolution within Nature is also present in human beings as an impulse toward self-preservation that compels humans to advance their own psycho-spiritual development.” As evidence of this lens I present the 12 participants, each one, who volunteered to allow me to delve into a very sacred and personal aspect of their lives. In the process of exploring the lived experience during a wilderness rites of passage quest that these participants felt prompted psycho-spiritual transformation in their lives,

I was permitted to glimpse one step in a progression of psycho-spiritual development that left me awestricken at the magnificent potential of these beings. I realize, as I have previously stated, that I was blessed with only 12 perfect participants and that an extrapolation of their experiences to all of humanity stretches credibility. Nevertheless, I believe the greatness I glimpsed in each of these participants exists as a characteristic potential in all human beings.

Likely, similar potentials exist in all beings: Tree beings, dog beings, and other beings all have a characteristic potential to be Great Tree or Great Dog or Great Other Being, respectively. However, the evolutionary forces that created human beings with their advanced and powerful brains created a potential god or goddess in each human. I now present a synopsis of the beautiful, powerful potential I witnessed in each of the study's participants. One hundred percent of those whom I interviewed graciously, at least momentarily, allowed me really to see who they are. (I withhold Re-searcher from this present analysis because I present my thoughts on myself in the conclusion in chapter 6.)

Each one of the 12 participants of this study allowed me to glimpse his greatness. As I witnessed the demeanor of each around the experience of that glimpse, I could not help but think how our Western culture, perhaps even universal human culture, prevents us from allowing our lights to shine. I was reminded, as I reflected on this phenomenon, of the quote of Marianne Williamson (1992) used by Nelson Mandela in his inaugural and sometimes attributed to him:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. (pp. 190-191)

I witnessed 12 people who were “powerful beyond measure.” These encounters led me to conclude that human beings are beings who are beautiful and powerful beyond their own imagining.

History is replete with human beings who, in terms of society’s mores, misdirected their greatness for purposes of personal power, thereby inflicting pain and destruction on others. This misdirection likely results from some thwarted psycho-spiritual development or some unanswered call from the unconscious or collective unconscious material of those individuals. We all ignore the shadow side of our greatness at great risk to ourselves and to others. The greatness of human beings necessitates the integration of all aspects of that greatness as they arise. My sense, as a result of conducting this study, is that human beings have a spark of divinity within them; how or whether they develop that spark is the essence of the human life.

Part of preservation for humanity is being psychologically and spiritually healthy. Over eons of time, humans have evolved greater self-reflective capacity that has necessitated psychological and spiritual vigor. Nature, or the life force that created this Earth and all of its creatures, has created great psycho-spiritual potential in each human being. When a human being undertakes, voluntarily, to trust herself to Nature in her quest to become a more actualized being, as one does on a modern wilderness rites of passage quest, Nature willingly assists that human in her quest.

Several of the participants of this study received help from Nature. I realize that an explanation for the evidence I provide that Nature assisted these marvelous human beings could be that these humans knew, at least unconsciously, why they were questing and projected the answers they knew they needed (in accordance with my last new lens) onto the elements of Nature that they happened to encounter. Such an argument describes my own view as expressed

in my strengthened lens regarding reflections on Nature as increasing self-awareness. However, my expanded lens regarding mystical experiences informing awareness was expanded (and perhaps subsumed) by this new lens. I am left with the impression that the experiences related to me by this study's participants were not mere consequences of natural occurrences. They may have been synchronicities (e.g., Jung, 1973), a contention that supports rather than detracts from the concept that Nature caused the occurrences. Incredible beings, the questers, put out a message that Nature, in her wisdom, answered in a manner profound and moving enough that the questers experienced opportunities for psycho-spiritual change.

For example, Nature placed a piece of petrified tree in an area where there were no petrified trees so that Ancient Tree could find it and hear its message for him. I believe it would be even more miraculous to know how Nature accomplished this task. I imagine a crow attracted to the shiny piece picking it up in an area where many such pieces exist, flying many miles, and, becoming distracted by a soaring hawk, dropped the piece and promptly forgot all about it. Nature caused Soul Dancer to become ill so that she would perform most of her quest in the hospital and learn that she can help elders who are unable to make it to the wilderness experience quest as she had finally done. The voices of Nature called Spearman and then She led him to an ancient spear in the middle of a field. The knowledge that Nature had guided him to that place was the source of a lot of meaning for Spearman. A young woman normally frightened of spiders is introduced by Nature to a huge tarantula that provides Spider Woman with the message of her quest and a new name. She sleeps for 3 nights in a cave with the tarantula in an act of total submission to Nature. Stillwater awakes from an afternoon nap during his wilderness rites of passage quest to find the lizard Nature had sent to teach him sunning upon his stomach.

These experiences so packed with meaning for the questers who encountered them seem too perfect to be regarded simply as coincidences. The more closely one examines the experience, the more one is impressed with the mystical power involved. When coupled with the understanding of the greatness of each human being and the psycho-spiritual aid provided by the occurrences, it seems that the mystical power, which I have referred to as Nature, purposefully caused the happenings because of that greatness and that impetus to provide aid. When I have served as a wilderness rites of passage guide, I have, on occasion, felt prompted, perhaps in a manner similar to the prompting experienced by Climber's bear, by some force to say or do something in service of one of the questers. I find it necessary to be very honest with myself in that role in order to assure that the force does not originate in my ego but comes from some deeper source.

The new 14th lens is "The context of the events in one's life that precipitates the answering of a call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest significantly influences the psycho-spiritual transformation that may occur as a consequence of the quest." I expected, as the construction of the study suggests, that the experiences that the individual encountered during a wilderness rites of passage quest would be the primary indicator of the psycho-spiritual transformation the quester underwent. The data clearly show that the experience provided a catalyst for the transformation initiated by the context of the quester's life.

As described above, the context of the participants' lives and their stated reasons for seeking a wilderness rites of passage quest correlate directly with the psycho-spiritual transformation they encountered. For example, Dreamer felt that he was in a state of crisis, that he had no direction, and that he had been abandoned. He discovered his life purpose, leading wilderness rites of passage quests, and that he is supported in his work. Earth Child had always

felt a hunger that was not fed, was pulled by that urge, and found from her quest that she was satisfied by discovering a home on the Earth. He Bear said something was missing in his life; he discovered an innocent part of himself that he continues to integrate. Thinker's marriage was in upheaval, and he discovered what it is like to be lost and found a more openhearted self. All of the participants found exactly what they needed, given the context of what was happening in their lives.

The new 15th lens is "Human beings possess an innate understanding of the transformation they require for their psycho-spiritual development to continue. They set the intention that allows them synchronistically to align with experiences in Nature to aid in that transformation." As stated above, the last two of my new lenses are closely related. I came to believe, as I interviewed the participants and delved deeply and intuitively into the information they provided me, that they had possessed the knowledge at an unconscious or collective unconscious level of the psycho-spiritual transformation that was required for them to continue their development before they encountered the experiences that provided the catalyst to encourage them to make that transformation. As I witnessed the unfolding of the 12 stories explored by this study, I noticed that each participant had felt that (a) she had found something of value that she specifically needed and that aided her in her psycho-spiritual development and (b) the source of the something she found was numinous. My own experience, as well as the literature of many Jungian writers (explored further in Cycle 5 of this Intuitive Inquiry) testifies to the numinous sentiment accompanying conscious recognition of material from the unconscious and collective unconscious. The participants of this study, by a process of self-selection, all consciously recognized, and are in various stages of integrating, material they feel serves the purpose of their psycho-spiritual development. Given that a numinous feeling

accompanied that conscious recognition and that the material was perfectly suited to the context of their lives at the time of its appearance, I have come to believe that that material originated in the unconscious or collective unconscious material of those participants.

The participants knew what they needed at the time they went on a wilderness rites of passage quest, as is evidenced by their statement of the reasons that they had decided to go on the quest. Ancient Tree wanted to find out what he was supposed to do in his life. Climber sought a script by which to live her life. Dreamer needed direction. Earth Child needed to fill a hunger for belonging. He Bear looked for something that was missing. Lioness needed something in her life to change. She Bear wondered where her path led. Soul Dancer sought conscious elderhood. Spearman sought for meaning in his life. Spider Woman needed grounding. Stillwater looked for direction. Thinker needed to “take stock” of his life. The participants consciously examined the contexts of their lives and decided that they needed to find a piece of information in which they could believe that would prompt some transformation of the status quo. The participants obviously knew they needed something and expressed some specificity about what they needed.

As has been shown above, the “something” they found perfectly suited the “something” they sought. In the setting of a wilderness rites of passage quest, with the ego quieted and the miracles of Nature noticed, the unconscious and collective unconscious material of the quester rises to the surface, to awareness. With Nature’s helping catalysts, this material reveals the “something” the quest seeks. While the quester looks outside for the answers, they arise from deep inside and make themselves known. As an observer of the 12 stories, I saw this process clearly. Each participant possessed within herself the answer she sought. That answer gained

credibility and stature when it appeared to come from the outside, but it did, in fact, as I witnessed, come from the deep inside.

As a consequence of my involvement with this study, four new lenses now inform my understanding of the psycho-spiritual transformational potential of wilderness rites of passage quests: (a) human beings are beautiful, powerful beings beyond their own imagining; (b) because human beings represent one of Nature's greatest achievements, the powerful force that drives the preservation and evolution of Nature helps individual human beings in their development; (c) the immediate life context of a wilderness rites of passage participant provides the best indication of psycho-spiritual transformation she might undergo as a result of her quest experiences; and (d) human beings possess knowledge at an unconscious or collective unconscious level of the psycho-spiritual transformation that is required for them to continue their development.

*Synthesis of Questers' Contexts, Experiences, and Transformations: A Composite Story*

I present the following composite story as a means to consider how various experiences, themes, and lenses described in this study may relate to the life of one individual. It is not intended as the distillation of essential components of a universal experience of a wilderness rites of passage quest. Although the character in this composite, whom I have named Coyote, is fictional, I realize, as I wrote in the preface to this study, that, "in the end, this study is about my own self-discovery." I recognize that, in the thematic content analysis, my intuitive impressions of the participants' stories, and my re-examination of my preliminary lenses, I have projected much of myself into the processes. I have felt these projections and, more intensely, the consequent reflections. Recitation of this composite story recognizes and honors the existence of those feelings and reveals a very personal and, heretofore, very private part of me to the reader.

At the time Coyote decides to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest, his life is

in a state of crisis. He feels as if everything has been uprooted. The script for his life is not playing out at all as he had expected. He senses a call to change.

Coyote hears the call clearly. When he sees the wilderness rites of passage brochure, even before he finished reading it, an urge to quest that feels like an unfed hunger arises deep in his gut. Because all of his beliefs and agreements with life have been called into question, he seeks some meaning in what is happening to him. In reality he seeks to understand who he is, to gain some sense of purpose for his life, and to find some serenity amidst the turmoil.

During the solo portion of his wilderness rites of passage quest, Coyote spends many hours talking to and being taught by a juniper tree who tells him its name is Twisted Tree. He feels that Nature guided him to his solo spot. The night before he finds it, Coyote dreams of it. He sees Twisted Tree growing out of solid rock, battered and beaten by the weather, standing tall and proud near a red rock cliff. As he sits in the spot and projects his inner self on the rocks, he finds many faces of himself staring back at him.

On the second night of his solo quest, a black bear ambles by Coyote's tarp. She sniffs at a container of water Coyote had hung in a tree, glances at him, and continues down the slope. His heart beats wildly in his chest. He is terrified but also realizes that, in that one instance, he has been seen by Nature. He experiences a shift in awareness—he sees himself as the bear sees him and has a deep knowing that Nature accepts him, and Coyote begins to accept himself. His tears express the mixture of terror and joy. Nature in Her incredible synchronistic power, together with his own power of intention, direct that bear to “happen” upon him. Before he can sleep again, Coyote has to give himself completely over to Nature and trust that, whatever happens, he will be okay. When he finally does, he knows he is at “home” again in Nature. He is at “home” again in himself. The quest, if it provides him no other insights, has allowed him to

remember his connection with Nature by providing him with the opportunities to meet Twisted Tree, the bear, and the faces in the rocks—himself.

Coyote sees in Twisted Tree what is in him. He is strong and fearless. He has scrambled to make a life from tough circumstances; brutal forces have battered him, yet here he stands to be seen by all. He also realizes that the faces he sees in the rocks are parts of himself. His encounters in nature with Nature and his projections and the consequent reflections on Nature that occur because of the opportunities provided during his wilderness rites of passage quest provide him the opening finally to embrace this increased self-acceptance.

On the last night of his quest, Coyote sees reflected in the rocks the toughest part of himself for him to recognize: the Buddha. He feels that this is the message of his quest. In part because of his childhood wounding, he has never been comfortable respecting and loving himself. His message is to set his people free. Although the Buddha message provides him with a sense of purpose, he wonders what it means. He has come to know, with a deep knowledge, that the Buddha in him needs to be recognized in order to be integrated into his authentic self and thus to complete the psycho-spiritual transformational opportunity provided by his wilderness rites of passage experiences. Indeed, the Buddha part of him, the Divine Nature that is he, needs to be recognized.

Coyote slowly comes to believe that he, too, is a human being of great potential worthy of love and respect, even from himself. He realizes that Nature Herself thinks he is worthy of a bear visit. He comes to know that it is he who at some level has recognized the dissonance of his life—that it is even possible he has brought about, or caused that dissonance to be brought about, in an unconscious way because a radical shift is needed in his life. He realizes he has projected the Buddha part of himself onto the rocks and has seen it reflected back. It requires the catalyst of

projection of his compartmentalized inner self on the wide expanse of the outer wilderness of his quest for him to break down the internal compartmentalization and to see his own Buddha-nature.

Coyote knows at some deep level what he needs for his own psycho-spiritual development. He intends that Nature provide him with some synchronistic catalyst to spark the transformation he unconsciously seeks in the furtherance of his own psycho-spiritual development. He glimpses the greatness that is his potential during his wilderness rites of passage quest. Coyote continues on his quest to this day. Furthermore, he begins to understand more fully the Buddhist concept of Bodhisattva: He can not completely reach his potential until all people are free to reach theirs, not until every human being is free to see and embrace her own divine potential.

## Chapter 6: Findings, Cycle 5, and Conclusion

This chapter contains a presentation of the study's findings, Cycle 5 of the Intuitive Inquiry process for this study, and the conclusion of the study. I present a theory that has emerged from the first four cycles of the inquiry. I then examine the theory in light of the literature identified in chapter 2 (and additional literature, where relevant) and my strengthened, expanded, changed, and new lenses. I share some thoughts about mistakes made during this study. I determine what is valuable about the study and what can now be said about the psycho-spiritual transformational potential of encounters during a modern wilderness rites of passage quest. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the study and some suggestions for areas of future study to reveal that which remains undisclosed in this study.

### *Findings*

This study, to this point through the first four cycles of Intuitive Inquiry, has explored the lived experiences of individuals who participated in modern wilderness rites of passage quests, experienced encounters during those rites that invited major transformations in their lives, and attempted to integrate those encounters into their lives. It asked: What is the nature of the lived experience of individuals who believe that they experienced an encounter on a modern wilderness rites of passage quest that has propelled them into psycho-spiritual transformation? What was the nature of the lived experience for the individual? What was going on in the individual's life at the time and, over time, how did the experience propel the individual toward psycho-spiritual transformation in her or his life?

The study answered the question of the nature of the lived experience with resounding evidence that all participants, regardless of the particulars of the encounter in the wilderness during a wilderness rites of passage quest, experienced a connection with Nature. The question

regarding what was going on in the lives of the questers led to the discovery that the context of the quester's life when she decided to engage in a wilderness rites of passage quest was often a state of unsettled yearning. This yearning appeared (a) to sprout from the quester's own, probably unconscious, longing to develop psycho-spiritually and (b) to be related to whatever psycho-spiritual transformation occurred. The question about how the experience led to psycho-spiritual transformation elicited evidence that the connection with Nature discussed above facilitated a discovery of *other* aspects of the quester's self, which discovery led to psycho-spiritual transformation as the quester attempted to integrate them.

With these answers to the research questions in mind, it becomes clear that the information gathered in the hermeneutical processes of this Intuitive Inquiry leads to the formulation of this theory: A modern wilderness rites of passage quest serves as an accelerant to the psycho-spiritual transformational process of questers who intentionally and earnestly undertake their own, likely unconscious, version of the archetypal, yearning-discovery-integration, hero's journey.

The structure of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest purposely contains the three stages of a hero's journey: (a) the separation, (b) the threshold, and (c) the reincorporation (Clements, 1992; Davis, 2003; Foster & Little, 1989, 1992; Plotkin, 2003). This study indicates that, although this structure likely contributes to the quester's experience of a hero's journey, the actual experience of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest, for those who claim it promoted psycho-spiritual transformation, is naturally and exactly the archetypal hero's journey. A state of unsettled yearning, the context in which a quester hears the call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest—which may be the quester's own unconscious need to develop psycho-spiritually—provides the separation stage for the hero's journey. The threshold phase of the

hero's journey comes during encounters on the quest, regardless of their specific phenomenology, that generally involve, recognition—through both immersion and ritual—of a connection between the outer landscape of the wilderness and the quester's inner psychological landscape. The reincorporation phase of the hero's journey may take many years for the participants in wilderness rites of passage quests. This phase involves the process of psycho-spiritual transformation, which invariably requires the integration of some previously unrecognized but nascent aspect of the quester's self discovered as a result of the inner-outer connection gained during the quest.

A common thread that I recognized early on in the course of the study was that there seemed to be a two-fold force that drove each phase of an earnest quester's hero's journey: (a) a strong evolutionary life energy or *sacred internal* within the questers that caused the unsettled longing in the context of their lives, enabling them to hear the call to quest and b) some *sacred external* that infuses all of life, a commonality of life that we share with each other, the Earth, and other-than-human beings, which becomes more apparent in a ritualistic container in the still wilderness.

During the threshold of the wilderness rites of passage/hero's quest, the quester, through various phenomenological encounters, realizes that the *sacred internal* that has driven her to quest and the awesome *sacred external* in which she sits while in the wildness are one and the same. When the quester recognizes his inner world, no longer defined by the constant reminders of his ego, it blends with the landscape of wilderness around him. The quester's inner world becomes the outer; the outer world merges into the inner. The duality of outer and inner ceases to exist. This merging promotes the quester's ability to find meaning in the elements and creatures of the wilderness, which reveal to the quester his own attributes. The quester may experience

psycho-spiritual transformation by integrating these previously unrecognized aspects of himself discovered through his widened view of the inner-outer connection.

This *sacred internal/sacred external* may be variously called Nature, Spirit, or other names as various peoples have attempted to name it. A member of my dissertation committee kindly pointed out to me my reluctance to identify this *sacred internal/sacred external* as God. As I reflected on this I allowed that, as Whyte (1992) pointed out, it might be primarily the name itself that I repeatedly refuse to say. The reluctance to name God stems from my Mormon upbringing. A lens, and one of the prisons from which I still struggle to free myself, is the Mormon personification of God. The *sacred internal/sacred external* identified in this study seems to me to be strong evidence of the transpersonal and is far beyond what I was taught of God. If I had to name it, I would call it Nature, as I have throughout this study. (However, I must point out that, as Re-searcher continues his own quest, *Nature*, as a name, seems too *outer*; and perhaps should be replaced with *Coyote*.)

This study indicates that Nature, this *sacred internal/sacred external*, promotes and drives the hero's journey that earnest questers experience. The hero's journey likely arose in human mythology because it represents the commonality of the yearning-discovery-integration cycle experienced by human beings over eons of time. The structure and nature-immersion of the modern (and indigenous) wilderness rites of passage quest provide a catalyst or accelerant for this Natural process of the hero's journey.

#### *Cycle 5: Integration of Findings and Literature Review*

Anderson (2006) described Cycle 5 of Intuitive Inquiry as a "return arc" of taking the study's findings back to the literature. She outlined the process in these specific terms:

Based on working the hermeneutical process of Cycles 1 through 4, in Cycle 5, the intuitive researcher presents authoritative theoretical speculations and theory related to

the topic of study. As in all research reports, at the end of the study, the researcher returns to the literature review done prior to data collection and reevaluates that theoretical and empirical literature in light of her findings. In other words, the researcher must determine what is valuable about the study and what is not, sorting through the assets and liabilities of her interpretive cycles, and determine what can now be said about the research topic, including what he feels is still undisclosed. (p. 26)

The literature supports the theory emerging from this study that a modern wilderness rites of passage quest serves as an accelerant to the psycho-spiritual transformational process of questers who intentionally and earnestly undertake their own, likely unconscious, version of the archetypal, yearning-discovery-integration hero's journey. The following analysis presents a return to the literature review contained in chapter 2 in light of the findings of this study.

A modern wilderness rites of passage quest contains the three phases of the archetypal hero's journey: separation, threshold, and reincorporation. Foster and Little (1992) argued that the structure of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest draws upon "the power of ancient archetype and symbol" in order to provide the quester with the tools needed to create his or her own myths and ceremonies of passage and confirmation (p. 22). Regarding the separation stage of the hero's journey, many writers supported the idea that one's soul *causes* disquiet or longing in one's life in preparation for hearing a call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest (e.g., Clements, 1992; Davis, 2003; Foster & Little, 1989, 1992; Plotkin, 2003, 2008).

Interestingly, most of this study's participants were mid-life or older when they heard the call. Plotkin wrote: "Jungian analysts (and Jung himself) say that it is rare to be ready for the descent to soul . . . until midlife, until, say, our mid-forties" (2008, p. 250).

The research of Cohen (1997); Davis (1998); Hartig et al. (1991) and of Swan (1992) demonstrated that the healing and sense of unity one encounters with Nature supply the archetypal "fabulous forces" of the threshold phase of the hero's journey for modern wilderness rites of passage questers. Greenway (1995) and Harper (1995) focused on the psychological

benefits of interacting with Nature. Riordan (2002) wrote of the transformative aspects of participating in wilderness adventures. For modern humans, presence in the wilderness, along with its resultant connection with Nature, truly comprises a wondrous, magical place equivalent to the places to which the mythical heroes ventured.

Foster and Little (1992) suggested that the reincorporation phase of the hero's journey is the integration of aspects of self that were encountered while accessing the inner-outer connection between self and Nature during a wilderness rites of passage quest. They refer to the reunion of these aspects of self as an experience of "Vision":

Vision is the ability to see the future. Vision is the ability to dream. Vision is the surging upward of personal creative energy. Vision is one's life work. Vision is a marrow-deep feeling, a knowing, a recognition of self, a realization of what you can do. Vision is transcendent, mystical knowledge—cosmic consciousness. Vision is the sight of the sun rising in the east to answer the hope that another day will come. Vision is a series of "ahas!" about what your life has been and could be. (p. 55)

The third phase of a hero's journey, reincorporation, involves bringing into consciousness that *other* aspect of the quester's self that she encountered as the result of hearing the calling (from her own soul) to quest, separating herself from the status quo, and going over into the threshold of the *fabulous forces* of Nature that facilitated the encounter.

This *sacred internal/sacred external* that I call Nature is evidence of this transpersonal reality: We all possess a greatness that is much larger and more powerful than our illusion of our separate individual selves. Johnson (2008) called this authentic selfhood "inner gold" and averred that it is sometimes difficult to recognize one's gold and, once it is recognized, to carry it. Many other authors, indeed many religions and movements, have recognized the existence of an "authentic self" within humankind (e.g., Coelho, 1993; Davis, 1999; Gyatso, 1995; Hillman, 1975, 1996; Trungpa, 1984). In fact, such a concept forms the core of transpersonal psychology as envisioned by James (1902/1958), Maslow (1968, 1971), and Walsh and Vaughan (1993).

*Context of questers' lives and call to change.* This study finds that the context in which a quester hears the call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest is an unsettled longing that seems to emerge from the quester's own unconscious need to develop psycho-spiritually and that can be found to correlate directly with whatever psycho-spiritual transformation the quester may experience as a result of participating in a quest. Campbell (1968) described the context in which someone's unconscious personality prepares her for the call to quest:

That which has to be faced [that] is somehow profoundly familiar to the unconscious—though unknown, surprising, and even frightening to the conscious personality—makes itself known; and what formerly was meaningful may become strangely emptied of value. . . . This first stage of the mythical journey—which we have designated the “call to adventure”—signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. (p. 58)

He also noted that blunders, although seemingly occurring by chance, are not mere accidents but are “the result of suppressed desires and conflicts” (Campbell, 1959, p. 51). Plotkin (2008) also pointed out that feelings of unsettled yearning or crisis might be unconscious calls to quest:

The vast majority of midlife crises might be better understood as overdue calls to adventure, as spiritual opportunities triggered by a personal crisis—an affair, severe job dissatisfaction, an empty nest, or the simple realization one day that you're not going to live forever. (p. 250)

As Campbell (1959, 1968) and Plotkin (2008) support, the unsettled longing as the context of the lives of the participants in this study at the time they answered their respective calls to quest likely resulted from the dissatisfaction of their own unconscious minds with the unfulfilled nature of their own lives.

Given that, in today's modern society, few rites of passage actually exist to serve an individual in answering calls to change. If one does encounter such an opportunity, it is usually not until adulthood, as Plotkin (2008) explained: “In Western culture, the passage into the Cocoon [the place of the wilderness rites of passage quest], if reached at all, often occurs many

years after we obtain the nominal status of ‘adult’” (p. 233). Since modern human societies do not typically provide rites of passage, the point in time at which a modern adult is hearing and answering the call to a wilderness rites of passage quest may be a more urgent occasion than is a customary, adolescent vision quest in an indigenous society. By the time a modern adult reaches adulthood, she has accumulated many “overdue calls.” The experiences of the study’s participants validated this fact.

Furthermore, as Hillman (1996) noted, each individual’s unconscious, which he referred to as the *acorn* or the *daimon*, knows the potential of the life that can be led and what must be done to live that life (p. 284). Ruumet (2006) also reminded her readers that we know when we need psycho-spiritual change: “When we connect with a myth or archetypal image, it brings new energy and meaning into our lives at times when we feel we are merely ‘treading water,’ ‘going through the motions,’ or ‘burning out’” (p. 10). The participants in this study demonstrated, as Hillman (1996) and Ruumet (2006) suggested, that the psycho-spiritual change they experienced as the result of their wilderness rites of passage quest was directly related to the unsettled yearning in their own unconscious personalities that had been created to encourage them to answer the call to quest in search of such a change.

*Threshold through exposure to wilderness.* This study indicates that, during the threshold stage of the Natural hero’s journey, the experiences encountered during a wilderness rites of passage quest, regardless of their specific phenomenology, generally involve, through a connection with Nature, the recognition that the inner psychological landscape of the quester and the outer wilderness in which she sits are one and the same. The exposure to wilderness, to nature, during a wilderness rites of passage quest is a helpful way (although not the only way) to become connected with Nature—with the concept of the interconnectedness of all life, even of

all things. Fisher (2002) described this cognition of unity as “a psychological undertaking that essentially says that *we too are nature*” (p. 8). He continued by noting that the philosophical task is “to turn the psyche inside out, locating mind in the world itself—healing our dualism by returning soul to Nature and Nature to soul” (p. 8).

My own experience before commencing the study had led me to believe that we are indeed interconnected with Nature. As described in the discussion of the refinement and transformation of my lenses, my preliminary lens number two regarding this connection was substantially strengthened by the study. The experiences of indigenous peoples’ connection with Nature is recorded in ancient mystical wisdom such as that of the Australian Aborigines (e.g., in Abram, 1996), the indigenous North Americans (e.g., in Brown, T., 1993; Cajete, 1999; Neihardt, 1988; St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995), and Western African tribesmen (e.g., in Somè, 1994), who all spoke of a “place” in Nature and in the world. Several modern writers have also explored the essence of this human-Nature connection (e.g., Tredinnick, 2005). I previously identified several ecopsychology theorists who have also written about the human/Nature connection and its healing benefits (e.g., Metzner, 1999; Roszak, 1992; Shepard, 1982; Swan, 1992), as have some scientists (e.g., Bartocci & Dein, 2005).

This study revealed that being in wilderness invokes in human beings a sense of homecoming or returning that relaxes and opens the human self to other ways of learning and to encounters with other aspects of themselves. Authors such as Abram (1996) and Gomes and Kanner (1995), as well as Kaplan and Kaplan (1989), have all written that such is the case. Authors such as Shepard (1982), who wrote that most modern human beings feel they are separated from Nature, and Metzner (1995), who pointed out that the loss of that connection contributes in part to the psychopathology of modern humans, referred to the longing for

maintaining or strengthening a connection that innately exists as part of the driving evolutionary force of psycho-spiritual development within each human being. Plotkin (2003), as well as Foster and Little (1992), wrote of the part Nature plays in the transformational potential of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest. They postulated that human beings instinctively know that Nature will heal and propel them along the path of their own psycho-spiritual development.

Plotkin (2003) described the openness to receiving help from Nature induced by the modern wilderness rites of passage quest as a “radical shift in awareness” (p. 222). By connecting with Nature and shifting their awareness, human beings open themselves to the contributions of other-than-human beings to the human experience, such as those described by many authors (e.g., Brown, T., 1993; Grimes, 2000, 2006; Harner, 1980; Kalweit, 1988; Neihardt, 1988; Somè, 1994; St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995; Villoldo, 2000). The nature of the contributions to human development from other-than-human beings may vary. The other-than-humans may be prompted by Nature to act in a certain way at a certain time in an attempt to convey a message to the human, the other-than-human being and the human being may be linked by some interspecies collective consciousness and communicate through that link, or the human may project his own psychology onto the animal and see himself reflected back. Deloria (2006) described three kinds of other-than-human communication with humans: (a) encounters within the sacred (what I call Nature), (b) encounter where humans are vulnerable, and (c) more secular encounters in which humans and other-than-humans share their knowledge about each other.

Regardless of the method or kind of interspecies communication, the connection with Nature opens the human beings to new awareness conveyed to them by other-than-human beings. Many of the participants in this study encountered other-than-human beings in Nature

during their wilderness rites of passage quests that provided the questers with opportunities to increase their self-awareness. On this subject Grimes (2005) wrote the following observation:

The import of this ethnographic testimony is that ritual participants [such as wilderness rites of passage questers] believe ritual activity enables them to cultivate a bond with animals and plants, even rocks, mountains, bodies of water and other holy places. (p. 133)

Contact with other-than-human beings, such as coyotes, tarantulas, bears, trees, bugs, and even rocks, enabled by the rituals of a wilderness rites of passage quest, was an important source of shifts in awareness for several of the participants of this study.

Finally, regarding the connection of human beings to Nature, this study shows that Nature provided the questers interviewed with encounters during their wilderness rites of passage quests that appear to be more than coincidental. Jung (1973) wrote about the acausal connecting principle of synchronicity, which he defined as the experience of two or more events that are apparently causally unrelated occurring together in a meaningful manner. He suggested that there is numinous and intuitive information available to those who remain alert to the amazing and inexplicable co-occurrence of seemingly unrelated events. The acausal connecting aspects of the encounters attributed to the wilderness quest by participants in this study resulted in the participant assigning meaning to those encounters. Those participants, who recognized the synchronicities as a gift of Nature, had set their intent to be open to information from such a source. This fact supplied the foundation of my new lens that Nature comes to the aid of those who consciously seek Her help in their psycho-spiritual development, which tenet is supported by the literature of Davis (1998), Foster and Little (1992), Swan (1992), and Plotkin (2003, 2008).

*Threshold through ritual.* A finding of this study is that the experiences encountered during a wilderness rites of passage quest, regardless of their specific phenomenology, generally

involve, through a connection not only with Nature but also with ritual, the recognition of the connection between the questers' inner psychological landscape and the outer landscape of the wilderness. The wilderness rites of passage quest is itself a ritual; however, such quests often involve many rituals within the ritual and suggest that the participant utilize prescribed rituals and rituals of her own creation. The results of this study demonstrated that wilderness rites of passage quests, through their use of ritual, could invoke the insight that is the recognition of the inner-outer connection. It may be that the power of the *sacred internal/sacred external* that drives and opens the quester is accessed through the use of ritual. Hence, wilderness rites of passage ritual has served for thousands of generations as a means with which to tap into this power (e.g., Bastien, 2003; Brown, T., 1993; Eliade, 1965; Kuckkahn, 2005; MacEowen, 2002; Neihardt, 1988; Somè, 1994; van Gennep, 1960; Wright, 1997). Modern ritual theory holds the view that ritual has a powerful impact upon the participants (Grimes, 2000, 2006; Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1960).

In a manner similar to that in which occurs the shift in awareness resulting from immersion in wilderness, ritual promotes a shift in awareness. A few of the study's participants related an experience of a shift in awareness involving a deep knowing as a result of the rituals in which they participated during their wilderness rites of passage quests. The literature also supports the concept of deep knowing. Van Raalte, in Braud and Anderson (1998), reports her experience of directly knowing. Jorge Ferrer (2002) describes deep, direct knowing as part of his participatory vision for transpersonal psychology. Washburn (2002) described deep knowing as "the awakening of insight [that] is a breakthrough to a heightened awareness that brings with it acute mental intuition. . . . [Such] infusions of numinous energy and waves of rapturous happiness are followed by feelings of being deeply anchored and profoundly at peace" (p. 198).

This quote offers a very accurate description of the study's participants' experiences as they related them to me.

Jung (1968) proposed that the source from which questers encounter this deep knowing might be a shift in awareness of dreams and active imagination stirred up by the tapping of collective unconscious material through archetypal rituals. Several authors support Jung's theories in their writings about ritualistic methodologies to engage dreams (e.g., Nelson, 2004; Taylor, 1992, 1998) and active imagination (e.g., Johnson, 1996; Gagan, 1998; Villoldo, 2000, 2006).

*Reincorporation by integration of previously unrecognized aspects of self.* The psycho-spiritual transformation experienced by participants in wilderness rites of passage quests invariably involved the integration of some previously unrecognized but nascent aspect of the quester's self. This was discovered when his awareness opened to allow him to see his inner psychological landscape in the wilderness he witnessed all about him.

Recognition and integration of material of both the personal and collective unconscious promotes psycho-spiritual transformation (e.g., Coburn, 2006; Dalal, 2001; d'Aquili & Newberg, 2000; Hillman, 1975; Maslow, 1987; Johnson, 1986, 2008; Jung, 1968; Ruumet, 1997, 2006; Washburn, 1999, Wilber, 2000). Enabled by rituals and a connection with Nature, the participants of this study encountered—through the increased awareness of dreams, active imagination, deep knowing, numinous contacts with other-than-human beings, mystical experiences, and reflections on Nature—experiences bearing the potential for psycho-spiritual transformation. These experiences revealed to the quester some aspect of herself, which she was able to see because she was in a state of openness induced by recognition of the melding of the inner and outer landscapes. Once a “new” aspect is recognized in such a state, the process of

integration can begin.

Several of the participants in this study experienced the opportunity to recognize and integrate “other” aspects of their selves. As discussed above, such opportunities presented themselves as encounters with material from the unconscious and collective unconscious that emanated from dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, contact with other-than-human beings, mystical experiences, and reflections on Nature—all as the result of a ritual-rich wilderness rites of passage quest wherein they remembered their acausal connection with Nature. Sri Aurobindo taught, and Ken Wilber agreed, that it is unlikely one can advance to transpersonal stages of development without attaining the ability to access the soul through the subtle, or acausal, state of consciousness (Dalal, 2001; Wilber, 2000). The participants experienced the immediate, pre-integration sense of encountering such an “other” part of themselves as a development of their self-concepts. Integration of such expanded self-concepts constitutes a method of impelling psycho-spiritual transformations (e.g., Coburn, 2006; d’Aquili & Newberg, 2000; Hillman, 1975; Maslow, 1987; Johnson, 1986; Jung, 1968; Ruumet, 1997, 2006; Washburn, 1999).

Several participants described their psycho-spiritual transformation as that of moving toward being in a more authentic way. The literature suggests that psycho-spiritual transformation involves the development of human potential. As described above, the recognition and integration of “other” aspects of one’s self is an example of such transformations (e.g., Coburn, 2006; d’Aquili & Newberg, 2000; Hillman, 1975; Johnson, 1986; Jung, 1968; Maslow, 1987; Ruumet, 1997, 2006; Washburn, 1999), with the result that one is more one’s authentic self. Wilber (2000) described a Witness or Self that appears in the transpersonal stages of development and embraces the concept of an authentic self. Maslow (1968) wrote: “Authentic

selfhood can be defined in part as being able to hear these impulse-voices within oneself, i.e., to know what one really wants or doesn't want, what one is fit for and what one is not fit for" (pp. 190-191).

Wilber (2000) and Maslow (1968), in particular, seem to define the authentic self as the strong evolutionary or spiritual *sacred internal* that is within all humans and that drives human psycho-spiritual development. When one realizes that this *sacred internal* and this *sacred external* that is a part of everything around us are one and the same, one has the power to recognize and integrate previously unrecognized aspects of themselves and begin to exist—simply to be—in a more authentic way. These insights align perfectly with the findings of this study.

Another psycho-spiritual transformational theme that repeatedly appeared in the stories of the participants was the acceptance of both life and death with serenity and peace. Interestingly, two of those participants who cited this psycho-spiritual transformation, Stillwater and Spearman, reported that they were recovering addicts. I believe they had both been exposed to the Serenity Prayer, often recited in Alcoholics Anonymous settings and other recovery programs, written by Lutheran Pastor and theologian Reinhold Neibuhr: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference" (Brown, R., 1987, p. 257). Also, She Bear and Spider Woman had each provided services to recovery programs and had been exposed to the Serenity Prayer. This prayer taps into the collective unconscious material of all human beings who realize that they are aligning a *sacred internal* within them with some powerful *sacred external* they witness in the world around them.

A few of the study's participants felt that they had experienced psycho-spiritual

transformation by gaining a sense of purpose in their lives. As in the case of the two previously described themes of psycho-spiritual transformation, one's sense of purpose awaits discovery within oneself. Frankl (1939/1963) wrote, "One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life. . . . Man [*sic*] should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize it is he who is asked" (p. 172). Campbell (1968) observed that encountering and integrating the "other" into self makes "the values and distinctions that in normal life seem important disappear with the terrifying assimilation of the self into what was formerly only otherness" (p. 217).

As does the archetypal hero, the wilderness rites of passage questers undertake their journeys in search of something. Campbell (1968) described this quest as a search for the "Indestructible Body," the permanent, undying part of the hero's soul (p. 177). The quester seeks an archetypal boon, "soul and body food" or the "ineffable teaching of the beatitude beyond imagination," some ability or instruction to interact with the collective unconscious that will benefit her (pp. 177-178). However, this boon is not for the quester alone. Any meaningful sense of purpose includes service for others. The participants in this study who found a sense of purpose all found it in service for others: for example, in providing sustainable landscaping, guiding wilderness rites of passage, and serving elders. As Pearson (1991) wrote, the central undertaking of an archetypal hero's journey is the "willingness to sacrifice and be sacrificed for the healing or betterment of the world" (p. 142). Similarly, questers return to their community to share the sense of purpose gained on their journey. Participants in modern wilderness rites of passage quests seek a vision that takes many different forms for different questers but has at its core the "supreme boon" described by Campbell (1968) above. Foster and Little (1992) suggested that what the modern wilderness rites of passage questers seek is an insight into the

nature of things: some insight about who they are, why they are here, and what their missions are. Foster and Little (1989) argued that, if the quester does not bring something good to her community upon returning from her quest, she has no reason to undertake the quest in the first place.

The participants in this study illustrated that the *something good* with which they have returned to their communities is a better understood and integrated self. They encountered *other* aspects of themselves on a wilderness rites of passage quest because those aspects were exactly what their souls desired and caused them to encounter and because their sense of self had been expanded by the ritualism of the quest and by a remembrance of their non-dual interconnection with Nature. Their efforts at integrating the *other* aspects resulted in their garnering a sense of being an authentic self, enjoying a sense of serenity, or gaining a sense of purpose.

*Unique insights of the study.* The unique finding of this study, the finding that adds to the literature that currently exist, can be expressed in these terms: The structure of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest as a hero's journey, although it certainly accelerates an earnest quester's psycho-spiritual transformation with its immersion in nature and ritual, is not the driving force of the quester's experience of the hero's journey. A quester has within herself a *sacred internal*, of which she is likely unconscious, driving her to undertake a yearning-discovery-integration, hero's journey. This *sacred internal* likely causes her to hear the call to quest. When she realizes, at the threshold of the quest through a wide variety of encounters with the elements and creatures of nature, that this *sacred internal* in her and the magnificence of the *sacred external* I call Nature around her are one and the same, she is opened to recognizing previously unrecognized aspect of herself. When she undertakes to integrate these "new" or "other" aspects of herself she has the opportunity to experience psycho-spiritual transformation.

This study validated the hypothesis that earnest participants in wilderness rites of passage quests can experience psycho-spiritual transformation. Such transformation is often a long and ongoing process; however, the process appears to be accelerated by the undertaking of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest. This study validates also the hypothesis that a wide variety of encounters with the elements and creatures of the wilderness can contribute to the recognition of the nonduality of the *sacred internal* and the *sacred external* that is Nature. It seems that this recognition provides the openness to recognize “other” aspects of oneself and thereby becomes the accelerant to psycho-spiritual transformation.

#### *Concluding thoughts on Cycle 5*

The finding that emerged from the interviews of the participants of this study is supported in the literature and as viewed through my lenses as strengthened, expanded, changed, or newly formed. The finding of this study that a modern wilderness rites of passage quest serves as an accelerant to the psycho-spiritual transformational process of questers who intentionally and earnestly undertake their own, likely unconscious, version of the archetypal, yearning-discovery-integration, hero’s journey is supported in the writings of mythologists and in literature regarding modern wilderness rites of passage. The observation that there appears to be a strong evolutionary force or spiritual *sacred internal* and the *sacred external* that I refer to as Nature, which are aspects the same sacred power, that prompt the longing-discovery-integration cycle of psycho-spiritual development (accelerated by wilderness rites of passage quests) is supported by the literature of several leading transpersonal psychologists and the teachings of many of the world’s religions. My lenses 1, 8, 9, 13, and 15 relate to this observation.

The discovery of this study that an unsettled longing in life, the context in which a quester hears the call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest, results from the

quester's own unconscious need to develop psycho-spiritually and directly correlates to whatever psycho-spiritual transformation the quester may experience as a result of participating in a quest finds support in the literature regarding the nature of Jungian psychology and the archetypal call to adventure. My final lenses 1, 12, and 15 also support this finding.

The discovery regarding the experiences of unity and blending of the inner and the outer landscapes of the questers during their wilderness rites of passage quest also finds support in the literature regarding indigenous people, rites of passage, modern ritual theory, modern wilderness rites of passage writings, ecopsychology, mythology, neuropsychology, and transpersonal developmental psychology. My lenses 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 14 also supported this finding regarding the participants' experiences.

Finally, the finding that the participant's psycho-spiritual transformations involved integration of discovered aspects of self is supported by the literature of Jungian psychologists, neuropsychologists, transpersonal psychologists, mythologists, spiritualists, and religionists. This finding also finds support in my lenses 10, 12, 13, and 15.

### *Conclusion*

Before beginning this study, I spent some time engaging a "text." This phase of the study took much longer than I had expected because it turned out to be a slow unfolding. My text was Coyote in his capacity of the Fool. I dreamed of Coyote, encountered him in the physical world (both alive and dead), and slowly integrated the Coyote part of me into my self-concept. At that point, I selected the topic that has deep meaning for me personally and, I believe, for all modern human beings. I researched the literature and identified my lenses regarding the topic.

I then sought out 12 volunteer participants who believed they had experiences during their wilderness rites of passage quests that prompted them to undergo some form of psycho-

spiritual transformation around those experiences, and asked them about the context of their lives at the time of the quest and the nature of the transformations they underwent. I transcribed the interviews myself in an effort to garner information conveyed by means other than just the participants' words. For example, a spider appeared in one interview when the interviewee discussed a tarantula, the wind blew or crows cawed to emphasize a point, or deer wandered into the scene to bear witness. I took all of the information, including, of course, the words of the participants, on a wilderness quest with me. In sacred space I explored my own dreams and those the participants had related to me, I engaged in a shamanic journey for each participant, I noticed synchronicities, and have attempted to convey the findings with embodied and Nature-conscious writing.

I analyzed the data using a thematic content analysis technique and discovered one prevalent theme regarding the context of the participants' lives at the time they undertook the wilderness rites of passage quest: the call to change. I also discovered four themes regarding the experiences encountered during their quests: connection with Nature, Nature as a teacher, shift in awareness, and self-acceptance. Three themes, all related to self-development, that is, reconnecting with and advancing authentic self, purpose in life, and sense of serenity, emerged from the descriptions of the psycho-spiritual transformations described by the participants.

Informed primarily by intuitive impressions gained from the techniques described above, I reconsidered my primary lenses and found some strengthened by the study's result, some needing expansion to accommodate my intuitive findings, some requiring significant modification because the data and my intuition did not support them, and four new lenses emerging into development in the course of the study and the data analysis. I synthesized the information garnered from the modified lenses into my personal story and gained new insights

about myself as the “Wounded Re-searcher.” I developed a theoretical premise that a modern wilderness rites of passage quest can act as an accelerant for psycho-spiritual transformation through a process like that of the archetypal hero’s journey. I found from my data that, for these participants, the Natural hero’s journey emerged as (a) an unsettled longing in life, the context in which a quester hears the call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest and that results from the quester’s own unconscious need to develop psycho-spiritually and directly correlates to whatever psycho-spiritual transformation the quester may experience as a result of participating in a quest; (b) the experiences encountered during a wilderness rites of passage quest, regardless of their specific phenomenology, generally involved, through a connection with Nature and ritual, the recognition of the unity of the inner and outer landscapes; and (c) the psycho-spiritual transformation experienced by participants in wilderness rites of passage quests invariably involved the integration of some previously unrecognized but nascent aspect of the quester’s self discovered as a result of the expanded ontological view gained during the quest. Finally, I returned to the literature with the theoretical premises and the transformed and modified lenses in mind and found that all of the posited themes found support in the literature and my lenses as reconstituted.

*What were some weaknesses of this study?* I developed as an interviewer as I conducted the 12 separate interviews spread from coast to coast in the United States over the space of several months. I believe that my first few interviews were not as well focused as were the later interviews. More information could have been garnered, for example, about the context of the participants’ lives at the time they decided to quest. I did not realize in the early interviews that life context would emerge as a common theme; I sensed it emerging in later interviews and, consequently, explored it more extensively in those with follow-up questions.

By following the cycles of Intuitive Inquiry, I furthered the development of my intuitive skills. One of the weaknesses of this study is that, in retrospect, those skills were not as well honed as I would have wished them to be. For example, I observe that many of my own projections have made their way into my intuitive reflections and onto the interviews of the participants. I expect that, were I to conduct a similar study again, the intuitive insights would be more skillfully engaged and less of my own psychology would show up in my intuitive reflections.

Other weaknesses of this study have been suggested to be represented in the discussions regarding the transformation of my lenses. I appreciate the truthfulness of the Intuitive Inquiry method; I revealed the lenses through which I initially saw the subject matter and how those lenses were modified and transformed. Nevertheless, the fact is that I brought my preliminary lenses to the study undoubtedly left some evidence undiscovered. As I started the interview process, I was expecting certain information to emerge. Given these expectations, until my lenses transformed and modified through the cycles of this study, I believe I did not follow some lines of questioning regarding the information presented by the participant that my refined lenses would have prompted me to follow. I find it amazing, however, that, notwithstanding these original lenses, the information that comprises the findings of this study bubbled to the surface anyway, where it called out to be recognized.

As discussed above, a member of my dissertation committee helped me to recognize my reluctance to talk about God. I realized early on in the course of the study the existence of some *sacred internal* that infused all of life: a commonality in life that we share with each other and other-than-human beings, as well as a *sacred external* that propels humans (and perhaps other-than-human beings) toward psycho-spiritual development. In retrospect, I feel that this study

may inadequately deal with this finding, in large part, because of this reluctance of mine to name God.

The design of the study and the method selected, in retrospect, seem nevertheless to be perfectly suited to the topic. Adhering to the truthfulness inherent in the Intuitive Inquiry method, I must admit that the major weakness of the study was the inexperience of me, the researcher. I nonetheless also admit that I improved as a researcher as the study unfolded. This study served the purpose of a dissertation very well. Through original research, I learned a great deal about encounters during a wilderness rites of passage quest that may result in psycho-spiritual transformation, Intuitive Inquiry as a research method, 12 *perfect* participants, reporting the findings of a study, and myself.

*What was valuable about the study?* As described above in the discussion of Cycle 5, the unique finding of this study is that the structure of the modern wilderness rites of passage quest as a hero's journey, although it certainly accelerates an earnest quester's psycho-spiritual transformation with its immersion in nature and ritual, is not the driving force of the quester's experience of the hero's journey. It is valuable to suppose that a quester has within himself a *sacred internal*, of which he is likely unconscious, driving him to undertake a yearning-discovery-integration, hero's journey. It is valuable to appreciate that the realization, in the threshold of the quest, of the inner-outer connection with Nature, is the opening to the quester's opportunity for psycho-spiritual transformation. As described above, this study provides valuable evidence that earnest participants in wilderness rites of passage quests can experience psycho-spiritual transformation and that the process appears to be accelerated by the undertaking of a modern wilderness rites of passage quest.

Twelve individuals chose to participate in this study because they believed they had encountered experiences during their wilderness rites of passage quests that invited psycho-spiritual transformation in their lives. This study revealed that the context of every volunteer participant's life at the time she decided to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest was a state of some sort of disarray, unsettled longing, or transition. It further revealed that the psycho-spiritual transformation the participant believed he had undergone perfectly correlated with the prequest context of his life. The variety of experiences did not seem directly to effect the transformation that would satisfy the set intention or longing; they appeared to serve the function of a facilitator for the blooming of a transformation that waited like a seed within the quester.

This study illustrates that humans are connected with Nature, that encounters with Nature, numinous contact with other-than-human beings, mystical experiences, and psychological reflections on Nature all increase self-awareness. It demonstrates that wilderness rites of passage provide opportunities for such encounters. It also provides some evidence that, if that self-awareness is integrated, psycho-spiritual transformation is possible.

The psycho-spiritual transformation of each participant was the result of the participant's integrating some part of self encountered during the wilderness rites of passage. The process of integration appears to have been accelerated by the recognition of the unity of the inner-outer aspects of Nature. This realization itself is a psycho-spiritual transformation. Being one's self in a more authentic way, feeling more serene and peaceful, and securing a purpose in life comprised the psycho-spiritual transformations the participants experienced. Importantly, this study reveals that a modern wilderness rites of passage quest provides the opportunities for the kinds of experience that invite such psycho-spiritual change.

Finally, the study fulfilled its purpose of providing me, the Wounded Re-searcher, with the opportunity finally to integrate the great lesson of my own vision quest—that, in the end, the other people whom I was instructed to set free are the *others* I encountered during my quest who are, in fact, parts of me. They need to be set free to be integrated into my concept of myself so that I can become more whole.

Perhaps the greatest lesson of this study for me was the glimpses I experienced of the incredibly beautiful and powerful human beings who were its participants. I appreciate more than before the unbounded potential of all human beings. I also appreciate that a strong evolutionary *sacred internal* within all humans drives us toward psycho-spiritual development. That *sacred internal* is evidence of the transpersonal reality of Nature within all of us. It is likely that I saw the greatest that lies within me reflected in the beauty of these 12 perfect participants. It is a deeply touching numinous moment when one recognizes (again) that the inner self and the greatness in the outer participants are all part of the same magnificent Nature.

*Practical applications.* The findings of this study have broad application in transpersonal psychology as a whole and in the administration of modern wilderness rites of passage specifically. Several developmental psychologists (e.g., Maslow, 1987; Ruumet, 1998, 2006; Washburn, 1999; Wilber, 2000) taught that humans living in a modern society often face a crisis at some time in the middle of their lives (Campbell, 1972; Plotkin, 2008). This study illustrates that such a crisis may be an archetypal call or may be a calling bearing the significance of spiritual emergency (Watson, 1994) to delve into one's soul for parts of oneself abandoned there. If the call goes unanswered, the urgent thirst for integration of those abandoned parts may fester into terrible psychological consequences; hence, modern psychologists often mislabel many such callings as psychopathologies. If the call is answered, it will be discovered that, somewhere deep within the

quester, as this study shows, is the answer to his question. A quester may be a person who seeks answers in Nature, as in a wilderness rites of passage quest, but a quester seeking transpersonal therapy is also such a quester.

This study strongly suggests that the integration of encounters such as those experienced during a wilderness rites of passage quest and also in therapy provides opportunities for psycho-spiritual transformation. Perhaps many experiences labeled as psychopathologies may not, in fact, be pathological; rather, they may present opportunities for developmental progress. They may signal that something is missing from the lives of the sufferer; the “illnesses” may be the soul’s attempts to alert the afflicted that he is off the path of fulfilling his life purpose, that he lacks serenity, or that he has yet to identify his authentic Self.

The study demonstrates that modern humans, regardless of whether they live far from the wilderness, feel an innate connection with Nature. It appears that the feeling of “coming home” when venturing into the wilderness overwhelms any trepidation or fear the individual may have of being in the wilderness. Most importantly, we humans must remember that we are part of Nature. We have evolved as one of Nature’s most psychologically advanced creatures. That strong evolutionary force exists within us as a compulsion toward advancing our psycho-spiritual development. We all know, most likely unconsciously, what transformation we require in order to continue that development. We can allow Nature, with her evolutionary drive, to provide the synchronistic catalyst to prompt us to undergo that transformation.

As a modern wilderness rites of passage guide, I have learned that the specific experience that the quester has is much less important to her psycho-spiritual development than the fact that she has answered the call—that she has acknowledged the unconscious need to change, and that she is in the mystical embrace of Nature. The guide’s function is to keep her safe in this cocoon of

Nature (Plotkin, 2003) and let the forces of Nature and her own psyche work together to show her that the answers she seeks are within some part of her she has yet to recognize.

To the extent that I as a therapist or wilderness rites of passage quest guide—or any such guide—can provide direction to any spiritual force already activated within a quester, such orientation assistance may be best provided in an opportunity for the quester to explore with such a guide the context of the quester's life when she decided to quest. As this study illustrates, the context is more closely related to the psycho-spiritual transformation than is any specific experience. Likely, her life was in unsettled yearning. It may be very useful for her to understand that she may have unconsciously caused that yearning to force herself to separate from her own status quo.

Furthermore, a guide may help a quester realize that he likely unconsciously already knows what psycho-spiritual change is needed for his continued development. Gently guiding him to explore his dreams, active imagination, and altered states of consciousness, as well as synchronistic acausal events, may help him more quickly to uncover what his soul, the material of his unconscious, or the collective unconscious wants him to perceive. Nevertheless, as a guide, I must remember that the experiences of the quest, primarily that of connecting with Nature, are facilitators of the transformation. The experiences must be allowed to work their transformation on their own timeline, in an unfolding process that varies significantly from one quester to another (after all it has taken me 16 years, so far), to facilitate the very personal emergence of the integration necessary for psycho-spiritual transformation.

*What remains undisclosed: Areas for future study.* One of the major findings of this study, that a quester is unconsciously aware of the psycho-spiritual transformation that he requires at the time he answers the call to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest, was

not the original focus of the study's design. A study specifically designed to explore this question would add to the field: for example, a study involving interviews of questers before and after they quest that attempt to uncover what changes they think they need to make in their lives. The prequest interview might uncover some unconscious rumblings that come to light as a result of the quest, thereby strengthening this study's findings, which were all garnered from post-quest interviews.

Another of the study's findings, that the sense of non-dual unity that comes with a feeling of being connected with Nature during a wilderness rites of passage quest facilitates the process of integration of previously unrecognized parts of oneself, could be expanded to study whether other methods invoking that sense of non-dual unity also facilitates self-integration. For example, meditation may produce a feeling of non-dual unity similar to what a connection with Nature during a wilderness rites of passage quest may cause. The question to study would be whether this meditation-induced sense of unity might also facilitate the recognition and integration of *other* parts of the self.

The reader will notice that these two suggested areas of study involve the evolutionary or spiritual *sacred internal* that pushes us toward psycho-spiritual development and the *sacred external*, the non-dual spark in each of us that unites us all. Understanding this *sacred internal* and this *sacred external* that may be the God or Goddess part of us is surely the continued work of transpersonal psychology.

## References

- Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perceptions and language in a more-than-human world*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Aldred, L. (2000). Plastic shamans and Astroturf sun dances: New age commercialization of Native American spirituality. *American Indian Quarterly*, 24(3), 329-354.
- Anderson, R. (1998). Intuitive inquiry: A transpersonal approach. In W. Braud & R. Anderson, *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience* (pp. 69-94). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Anderson, R. (2000). Intuitive inquiry: Interpreting objective and subjective data. *ReVision*, 22(4), 31-39.
- Anderson, R. (2002). Embodied writing: Presencing the body in somatic research: Part I, What is embodied writing? *Somatics: Magazine/Journal of the Mind/Body Arts and Sciences*, 13(4), 40-44.
- Anderson, R. (2004). Intuitive inquiry: An epistemology of the heart for scientific inquiry. *The Human Psychologist*, 32(4), 307-341.
- Anderson, R. (2006). *Intuitive inquiry: The ways of the heart in research and scholarship*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Anderson, R. (2007). *Thematic content analysis: Descriptive presentation of qualitative data*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Anderson, R. (2008). *Intuitive inquiry: An epistemology of the heart for human science research*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Armstrong, K. (2005). *A short history of myth*. New York: Cannongate.
- Atchinson, V. (1998). *Restorative solitude: A heuristic study*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Bacon, S. (1983). *The conscious use of metaphor in Outward Bound*. Denver: Colorado Outward Bound School.
- Bade, T. (1984). *From boyhood to maturity: The hero's journey*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Saybrook Institute, San Francisco.
- Bartlett, F. (1932). *Remembering: An experimental and social study*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bartlett, F. (1958). *Thinking*. New York: Basic Books.

- Bartocci, G., & Dein, S. (2005). Detachment: Gateway to the world of spirituality. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 42(4), 545-569.
- Bastien, B. (2003). The cultural practice of participatory transpersonal vision: An indigenous perspective. *ReVision*, 26(2), 41-51.
- Berry, T. (1999). *The great work: Our way into the future*. New York: Bell Tower.
- Blos, P. (1979). *The adolescent passage*. New York: The International Universities Press.
- Bly, R. (1990). *Iron John: A book about men*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bransford, J., & Franks, J. (1971). The abstraction of linguistic ideas. *Cognitive Psychology*, 2, 331-350.
- Braud, W. (1998). Integral inquiry: Complementary ways of knowing, being and expression. In W. Braud, & R. Anderson (Eds.), *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience* (pp. 35-68). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Braud, W. (2003). *Distant mental influence: Its contributions to science, healing, and human interactions*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.
- Braud, W., & Anderson, R. (1998). *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Braud, W., & Anderson, R. (2002). *Integral research skills study guide*. Palo Alto, CA: Institute of Transpersonal Psychology.
- Brensinger, E. (2002). *Earth dreams: Finding light in the shadow*. Tripoli, PA: Red Road Press.
- Brown, D., Engler, J., & Wilber, K. (1987). *Transformations of consciousness: Conventional and contemplative perspectives on development*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Brown, R. (Ed.). (1987). *The essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected essays and addresses*. New Haven: Yale University.
- Brown, T. (1993). *Grandfather*. New York: Berkeley.
- Cajete, G. (Ed.). (1999). *A people's ecology: Explorations in sustainable living: Health, environment, agriculture, native traditions*. Santa Fe: Clear Light.
- Campbell, J. (1959). *The masks of God: Primitive mythology*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Campbell, J. (1968). *The hero with a thousand faces*. NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Campbell, J. (1972). *Myths to live by*. New York: Viking Penguin.

- Campbell, J. (1988). *The power of myth with Bill Moyers*. New York: Doubleday.
- Cardeña, E., Lynn, S., & Krippner, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Varieties of anomalous experience: Examining the scientific evidence*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Carroll, M. (2007). *The lived experience of being in a sacred place constructed as an archetypal circle*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Clements, J. (1992). *An investigation of the modern day vision quest as a transformative spiritual experience*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Coburn, M. (2006). *Walking home: Women's transformative experiences in the wilderness of the Appalachian Trail*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Coelho, P. (1993). *The alchemist* (A. Clarke, Trans.). New York: HarperCollins.
- Cohen, M. (1997). *Reconnecting with nature: Finding wellness through restoring your bond with the earth*. Corvallis, OR: Ecopress.
- Crick, F., & Mitchison, G. (1986). The function of dream sleep. *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 7(23), 229-249.
- Dalal, A. (Ed.). (2001). *A greater psychology: An introduction to the thought of Sri Aurobindo*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- d'Aquili, E., & Newberg, A. (2000). The neuropsychology of aesthetic, spiritual, and mystical states. *Zygon*, 35(1), 39-51.
- Davis, J. (1998). The transpersonal dimensions of ecopsychology: Nature, nonduality, and spiritual practice. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 26(1-3), 69-100.
- Davis, J. (1999). *The diamond approach: An introduction to the teachings of A. H. Almaas*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Davis, J. (2003). Wilderness rites of passage. In B. Taylor (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of religion and nature*, (pp 1150-1151). London: Thoemmes Continuum International.
- Deloria, V. (1986). *The world we used to live in: Remembering the powers of the medicine men*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum.
- Eliade, M. (1958). *Birth and rebirth: the religious meanings of initiation in human culture*. New York: Harper and Brothers.

- Eliade, M. (1965). *Rites and symbols of initiation* (W. Trask, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Ferrer, J. (2002). *Revisioning transpersonal psychology: A participatory vision of human spirituality*. New York: State University of New York.
- Fisher, A. (2002). *Radical ecopsychology: Psychology in the service of life*. New York: State University of New York.
- Foster, S., & Little, M. (1984). *The trail to the sacred mountain: A vision fast handbook for adults*. Big Pine, CA: Lost Borders Press.
- Foster, S., & Little, M. (1989). *The roaring of the sacred river: The wilderness quest for vision and self-healing*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Foster, S., & Little, M. (1992). *The book of the vision quest: Personal transformation in the wilderness* (Rev. ed.). New York: Prentice Hall.
- Foster, S., & Little, M. (1998). *The four shields: The initiatory seasons of human nature*. Big Pine, CA: Lost Borders Press.
- Frankl, V. (1939/1963). *Man's search for meaning*. New York: Pocket.
- Gagan, J. (1998). *Journeying: Where shamanism and psychology meet*. Santa Fe, NM: Rio Chama.
- Gomes, M., & Kanner, A. (1995). The rape of the well-maidens: Feminist psychology and the environmental crisis. In T. Roszak, M. Gomes, & A. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 122-135). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Gray, A. (2002). *Research practice for cultural studies: Ethnographic methods and lived cultures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Greenway, R. (1995). Wilderness effect and ecopsychology. In T. Roszak, M. Gomes, & A. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 122-135). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Grimes, R. (2000). *Deeply into the bone: Re-inventing rites of passage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grimes, R. (2006). *Rite out of place: Ritual, media and the arts*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Grof, S. (1994). *LSD psychotherapy*. Alameda, CA: Hunter House. Originally published in 1980.

- Gyatso, T. (1995). *The world of Tibetan Buddhism: An overview of its philosophy and practice*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom.
- Hanna, F. (1993). Rigorous intuition: Consciousness, being, and the phenomenological method. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 25(2), 181-197.
- Harner, M. (1980). *The way of the shaman*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Harper, S. (1995). The way of the wilderness. In T. Roszak, M. Gomes, & A. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 183-200). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Hartig, T., Mang, M., & Evans, G. (1991). Restorative effects of natural environment experiences. *Environment and Behavior*, 23(1), 3-26.
- Hibbard, W. (2007). The Native American sweat lodge ceremony: Reports of transpersonal experiences by non-native practitioners. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 39(1), 68-91.
- Hillman, J. (1975). *Re-visioning psychology*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hillman, J. (1979). *The dream and the underworld*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hillman, J. (1996). *The soul's code: In search of character and calling*. New York: Warner Books.
- Hollis, J. (1998). *The Eden project: In search of the magical other*. Toronto: Inner City Books.
- Ingerman, S. (1991). *Soul retrieval: Mending the fragmented self*. New York: HarperCollins.
- James, W. (1902/1958). *Varieties of religious experience*. New York: Random House.
- Johnson, R. (1986). *Inner work: Using dreams and active imagination for personal growth and integration*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Johnson, R. (2008). *Inner gold: Understanding psychological projection*. Kihei, HI: Koa Books.
- Jung, C. (1963). *Memories, dreams, reflections*. New York: Random House.
- Jung, C. (1964). *Man and his symbols*. New York: Doubleday.
- Jung, C. (1968). The archetypes and the collective unconscious (R. Hull, Trans.). *The collected works of C. G. Jung*: Vol. 9, Part 1. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

- Jung, C. (1973). Synchronicity: An acausal connecting principle (Hull, R., Trans.). In H. Read, M. Fordham, & G. Adler (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung*: Vol. 8. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.
- Kahn, P. (2001). *The human relationship with nature: Development and culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kakar, S. (1982). *Shamans, mystics, and doctors: A psychological inquiry into India and its healing traditions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kalweit, H. (1988). *Dreamtime & inner space: The world of the shaman* (W. Wunsche, Trans.). Boston: Shambhala.
- Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). *The experience of nature: A psychological perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuckkahn, T. (2005). Celebrating the Indian way of life. *American Indian Quarterly*, 29(3/4), 505-511.
- Leonard, G. (1992). How to have an extraordinary life. *Psychology Today*, 25(3), 42-47, 86-90.
- Lowenthal, M. (2004). *Alchemy of the soul: The Eros and Psyche myth as a guide to transformation*. Berwick, ME: Nicolas-Hays.
- Maslow, A. (1968). *Toward a new psychology of being*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Maslow, A. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York: Viking.
- Maslow, A. (1987). Self-actualizing people: A study of psychological health. In *Motivation and personality* (pp. 149-180). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- MacEowen, F. (2002). *The mist-filled path: Celtic wisdom for exiles, wanderers, and seekers*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Mack, J. (1995). The politics of species arrogance. In T. Roszak, M. Gomes, & A. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 55-67). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Mandler, J. (1984). *Stories, scripts, and scenes: Aspects of schema theory*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Metzner, R. (1995). The psychopathology of the human-nature relationship. In T. Roszak, M. Gomes, & A. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 55-67). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

- Metzner, R. (1999). *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Neihardt, J. (1988). *Black Elk speaks*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Nelson, S. (2004). *Night wings: A soulful dreaming and writing practice*. Boston: Nicolas-Hays.
- Newberg, A., d'Aquili, E., & Rause, V. (2001). *Brain science & the biology of belief: Why God won't go away*. New York: Ballantine.
- Oliver, M. (1992). The summer day. In *New and selected poems* (p. 94). Boston: Beacon.
- Palmer, H. (Ed.). (1998). *Inner knowing: Consciousness, creativity, insight, and intuition*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- Pearson, C. (1986). *The hero within: Six archetypes we live by*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Pearson, C. (1991). *Awakening the heroes within: Twelve archetypes to help us find ourselves and transform the world*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Plotkin, B. (2003). *Soulcraft: Crossing into the mysteries of nature and psyche*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Plotkin, B. (2008). *Nature and the human soul: Cultivating wholeness and community in a fragmented world*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Quinn, N., & Holland, D. (1987). *Cultural models of language and thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Riordan, L. (2002). *Bringing the wilderness home: Integrating the transformative aspects of adventure into everyday life*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Romanyshyn, R. (2007). *The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind*. New Orleans: Spring Journal.
- Roszak, T. (1992). *The voice of the Earth: An exploration of ecopsychology*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rumelhart, D. (1980). Schemata: The building blocks of cognition. In R. J. Spiro, B. Bruce, & W. F. Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in reading and comprehension* (pp. 33-58). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Ruumet, H. (1997). Pathways of the soul: A helical model of psychospiritual transformation. *Presence: The Journal of Spiritual Directors International*, 3(3), 6-24.
- Ruumet, H. (2006). *Pathways of the soul: Exploring the human journey*. Bloomington, IN: Trafford.
- Shepard, P. (1982). *Nature and madness*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Shweder, R. (1991). *Thinking through cultures: Expeditions in cultural psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Smith, A. (2005). Native American feminism, sovereignty, and social change. *Feminist Studies*, 31(1), 116-133.
- Somè, M. (1994). *Of water and the spirit: Ritual, magic and initiation in the life of an African shaman*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Spezzan, C. (1992). What to do between birth and death: The art of growing up. *Psychology Today*, 25(1), 54-55, 86-87.
- St. Pierre, M., & Long Soldier, T. (1995). *Walking in the sacred manner: Healers, dreamers, and pipe carriers—medicine women of the plains Indians*. New York: Touchstone.
- Swan, J. (1992). *Nature as teacher and healer*. New York: Villard Books.
- Tart, C. (Ed.). (1990). *Altered states of consciousness*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Tart, C. (Ed.). (1997). *Body, mind, and spirit: Exploring the parapsychology of spirituality*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.
- Taylor, J. (1992). *Where people fly and water runs uphill: Using dreams to tap the wisdom of the unconscious*. New York: Warner Books.
- Taylor, J. (1998). *The living labyrinth: Exploring universal themes in myths, dreams, and the symbolism of waking life*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Taylor, J. (2008). *My stroke of insight: A brain scientist's personal journey*. New York: Viking.
- Tredinnick, M. (2005). *The land's wild music: Encounters with Barry Lopez, Peter Matthiessen, Terry Tempest Williams, and James Galvin*. San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press.
- Trungpa, C. (1984). *Shambhala: The sacred path of the warrior*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Trungpa, C. (1987). *Cutting through spiritual materialism*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process*. Chicago: Aldine.

- van Gennep, A. (1960). *Rites of passage* (M. Vizedom & G. Chaffee, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Van Raalte, S. (1998). Direct knowing. In W. Braud & R. Anderson (Eds.), *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience* (pp. 163-165). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Vaughan, F. (1995). *Shadows of the Sacred: Seeing Through Spiritual Illusions*. New York: Quest Books.
- Villoldo, A. (2000). *Shaman, healer, sage*. New York: Harmony.
- Villoldo, A. (2006). *Mending the past and healing the future with soul retrieval*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House.
- Walsh, R., & Vaughan, F. (1993). *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision*. Los Angeles: Tarcher.
- Washburn, M. (1995). *The ego and the dynamic ground: A transpersonal theory of human development*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Washburn, M. (1998). The pre/trans fallacy reconsidered. In D. Rothberg & S. Kelly (Eds.), *Ken Wilber in dialogue* (pp. 64-80). Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House.
- Washburn, M. (1999). Embodied spirituality in a sacred world. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 27(2), 133-172.
- Washburn, M. (2002). Transpersonal cognition in developmental perspective. In T. Hart, P. Nelson, & K. Puhakka (Eds.), *Transpersonal knowing: Exploring the horizon of consciousness* (pp. 185-212). Albany: State University of New York.
- Watson, K. (1994). Spiritual emergency: Concepts and implications for psychotherapy. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 34(2), 22-45.
- White, R. (1997). Dissociation, narrative, and exceptional human experience. In S. Krippner & S. Powers (Eds.), *Broken images, broken selves: Dissociative narratives in clinical practice* (pp. 88-121). Washington, DC: Brunner-Mazel.
- Whyte, D. (1992). The soul lives contented. In *Fire in the earth* (p. 31). Langley, WA: Many Rivers.
- Wilber, K. (2000). *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology and therapy*. Boston: Shambhala.

- Wilderness Guides Council. (2007). *Guide directory*. Retrieved April 18, 2007, from <http://www.wildernessguidescouncil.org/wgc/guides/usa/index.cfm>
- Williamson, M. (1992). *A return to love: Reflections on the principles of a course in miracles*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Wood, R. (2004). *Transpersonal perspective: My dreams, visions, and journeys*. Unpublished master's thesis, Naropa University, Boulder, CO.
- Wood, R. (2007a). The archetypal experience of a modern vision quest. *East Coast Sandplay Journal*, 8(1), 1-9.
- Wood, R. (2007b). *Breaking the shackles and leaving the cave: A personal escape..* Unpublished manuscript, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Wood, R. (2008). *Archetypal encounters in exceptional human experiences during modern vision quest: A research study*. Unpublished manuscript, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Wright, J. (1997). A cauldron-born quest: Speculation on European vision quest rituals. *The Shaman's Drum*, 46(1), 51-59.

### Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

Have you had an experience during a vision quest or wilderness quest that changed you life?  
Please read further.

If you believe you encountered such an experience during your wilderness rites of passage quest and you are interested in participating in a research study on this topic, please email to me at [vqstudy@gmail.com](mailto:vqstudy@gmail.com) a brief description of your experience and why you think it has changed your life. Please include your name, telephone number, and email address, so that I may contact you. I will be selecting only 12 participants; I will contact you to let you know if your experience is 1 of the 12 I will include in the study.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign a form consenting to participation and to complete a brief demographic questionnaire. You will also be given instructions for the study, which will involve recording your dreams and shamanic journeying to enable the exploration of subconscious ways that you may be integrating your wilderness rites of passage experience. The format will be a single one-on-one interview of approximately one hour in a neutral and natural location. You will be asked to bring an image, song, piece of poetry, part of Nature, or something else that expresses your experience on the wilderness rites of passage quest and that may serve as a way to introduce yourself to me. I will attempt to create a safe, sacred space in which you will feel comfortable sharing your personal experiences pertaining to your wilderness rites of passage. The session will be recorded and the information used in my dissertation study about wilderness rites of passage experiences. You will be given a chance to receive an electronic copy of the findings.

Many Blessings,

Robert Wood

## Appendix B: Informed Consent

To the Participant in this Research:

You are invited to participate in a dissertation study concerning your experiences of a wilderness rites of passage quest. Before you attend the interview, I will ask you to record any dreams, shamanic journeys (use of some form of drumming or rattling to go into an altered state that allows journeying, if you so choose), or synchronicities (coincidental occurrences that seem as if they have a purpose or meaning) that may relate to any understanding about your transformation resulting from the wilderness rites of passage quest. The format will be a single one-on-one interview of approximately 1 hour in a neutral and natural location of your choice. You will be asked to bring an image, song, piece of poetry, part of Nature, or something else that expresses your experience on the wilderness rites of passage quest and that may serve as a way to introduce yourself to me. I will attempt to create a safe, sacred space in which you will feel comfortable sharing your personal experiences pertaining to your wilderness rites of passage. The session will be recorded and the information used in a dissertation study about wilderness rites of passage experiences.

To protect your privacy your name will not be used in the study. All information received from you will be kept confidential as to source by means of using a number coding system. Data collected from the interview sessions will be kept locked in a secure place. Interviews will be transcribed, either by me or through a transcription service, and tapes and transcriptions will be kept strictly confidential. If a transcription service is used, transcribers will be required to sign a Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement attached to this informed consent form. Names will not be used with transcription material. Data may also be used anonymously in future publications pertaining to wilderness rites of passage, and some data collected may not be reported in the

dissertation; rather, it may be processed for future research. Your participation is voluntary at all levels and at all times.

Benefits of participation may include learning about your own personal reactions to, emotions toward, and thoughts about your wilderness rites of passage and bringing to your consciousness the psychological and spiritual meanings of the experience. Additionally, the results of this study may help others who participated in a wilderness rites of passage quest learn how to integrate their experiences into their lives. It may also help those individuals who have yet to hear the call of the wilderness rites of passage to understand more of the mysteries they may encounter should they choose to engage in such a rite.

This study, like all studies, may also have drawbacks. The experiences of a wilderness rites of passage quest might bring up unpleasant memories or psychological issues. These experiences may be difficult for some individuals to bring to consciousness. The issues raised within you may be painful or scary, or may challenge personal belief systems. Additionally, participation in this study may bring change, and change is not always easy.

This study is designed to minimize potential risks to you. The interview is designed to be integrative and healing. However, if at any time you feel you need additional assistance coping with an issue that has come out of participation in the study, resources and references will be available for you to follow up with on your own. If you have questions or concerns at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology Dissertation Chair for this study, Nancy Rowe, Ph.D., at [nrowe@itp.edu](mailto:nrowe@itp.edu) or Frederic Luskin, Ph.D., Chairperson of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology's Research Ethics Committee at [fluskin@itp.edu](mailto:fluskin@itp.edu).

If you decide to participate in this research, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. Summaries of the information gathered from the interviews, as well as thematic content and other analysis of the data will be presented in a descriptive format in the final report of the study. You may request an electronic copy of the entire research study by providing me with your email address.

I attest that I have read and understood this form, have had the study explained to me by the researcher, and have had any questions about this research answered to my satisfaction. My participation in this research is entirely voluntary; no pressure has been applied to encourage my participation. My signature indicates my willingness to be a participant in this research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

E-mail address (if requesting copy of research findings):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

### Confidentiality Agreement

#### Transcription Services

I, \_\_\_\_\_, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Robert Wood related to his doctoral study on Encounters Inviting Psycho-Spiritual Transformation Experienced by Participants of Modern Wilderness Rites of Passage Quests. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual who may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To refrain from making copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Robert Wood;
3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location for as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Robert Wood in a complete and timely manner;
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix D: Demographics and Personal Information Questionnaire

Given Numeric Code (01 through 20) participant # for confidentiality \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Ethnicity/Cultural Background (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

4. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Spiritual Practices (e.g., meditation, imaging, prayer, chanting) before, during, and after wilderness rites of passage experience?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Why did you decide to participate in a wilderness rites of passage quest?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Did you have a previous connection to Nature? How has that connection changed since the wilderness rites of passage quest? \_\_\_\_\_

8. In how many wilderness rites of passage quests have you participated? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Date(s) of wilderness rites of passage quest: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Length of Wilderness rites of passage quest: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Number of days of solo: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Number of days of fasting: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Wilderness rites of passage guide and company: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Other information you would like to share: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Instructions and Interview Preview Questionnaire

### PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Please read at least one week before our interview

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my study, [Name]. Your data will no doubt, help us to understand better encounters inviting psycho-spiritual transformation experienced by participants of modern wilderness rites of passage quests.

To help you to prepare for this interview, I am giving you time to dwell upon your transformational experience during your wilderness quest. During the interview, I will ask you to:

- (1) Describe your lived experience of your transformational wilderness rites of passage experience;
- (2) Consider when you recognized that it was transformational and identified the experience of the transformation; and
- (3) Explore how this experience has informed your life over time.

To prepare for the interview, please do the following:

1. Find and bring to the interview, an image, song, piece of poetry, part of Nature, or something else that expresses your experience on the wilderness rites of passage quest and that may serve as a way to introduce yourself to me. (If you are willing to leave this object with me; I will return it to you when the study is completed.)

*For example, were I being interviewed, I would bring a depiction of Coyote standing in a river. Coyote reminds me of my last trips into Nature when he sang most of the night; he*

*also has been helpful in my own recent processes of integrating my wilderness rites of passage experience.*

2. Keep track of relevant dreams, shamanic journeys (if you journey), and synchronicities.

As you consider the upcoming interview, please be aware of any dreams, journeys, and synchronicities that may inform your experience. Write them down and bring them to the interview. Write down any that seem important to you. You may want to spend some time in Nature to bring back the feeling of your experience as you think about these questions. As you recall your experiences, please be alert to other-than-human beings and synchronistic occurrences that may have played a part in your quest. You may also notice sensations in your body that may be clues to what the experience meant to you.

Please let me know if you have any concerns or questions regarding the interview.

Thank you,

Robert Wood

## Appendix F: Interview Protocol

This study explores the lived experiences of individuals who participated in modern wilderness rites of passage, experienced encounters during those rites that required major transformations in their lives, and attempted to integrate those encounters into their lives. The primary research questions are:

- (1) What is the nature of the lived experience of individuals who believe that they experienced an encounter on a modern wilderness rites of passage quest that has propelled them into psycho-spiritual transformation?
- (2) What was the nature of the lived experience for the individual?
- (3) Over time, how did it propel the individual toward psycho-spiritual transformation in her or his life?

Following is the protocol I will employ for each interview:

1. The participant and I will sit on the ground together. We will chat briefly to break the ice. I will ask the participant to bring Appendix D and tell me a little about him or herself, using the information in the demographics. I will ask about his or her relationship with Nature, spiritual practices, and experiences with wilderness rites of passage. I will also ask why he or she chose to do this quest at the particular time and what was going on in his or her life at that time. I will also ask if he or she has any unanswered questions about the study and whether he or she is still comfortable to proceed with his or her participation.
2. I will begin the session by opening sacred space with a few minutes of drumming.
3. I will ask the participant to use the image, song, piece of poetry, part of Nature, or whatever else she or he brought to the interview, as previously requested, that

- expresses her or his experience on the wilderness rites of passage quest and serves as an introduction to me.
4. I will begin the interview by placing a “talking staff” between the participant and me. A “talking staff” is a symbol of an indigenous tradition: only the holder of the staff may speak, such speech must come from the heart, and all others listen with the “ears of their hearts.” The participant will be invited to take the staff, as she or he feels moved to do so, and to talk from the heart about his or her wilderness rites of passage solo, following the prompting question, which had been previously provided, to him or her.
  5. I will then ask the first question: Please, tell me, in your own words, about your transformative wilderness rites of passage experience and what was going on in your life at that time.
    - a. If needed, I will follow up this question with the questions: Why do you believe that this occurrence was significant?
    - b. How did you determine it was in fact transformative?
    - c. Why and how was it transformative?
  6. I will then ask the second questions: You were selected as a participant in this study because you indicated that this wilderness rites of passage experience resulted in psycho-spiritual transformation. Please tell me more about the lived experience of this psycho-spiritual transformation.
    - a. If necessary, I may follow up with prompts: What was the nature of the experience you lived (i) at the time it occurred, (ii) at the time you recognized it as transformational, and (iii) over time as you and it have evolved?

- b. How has your life changed as a result of this experience?
  - c. How do you expect your life to change in the future as a result of this experience?
- 7. Then I will ask the final question: “Please tell me what was going on in your life at the time of your experience and how you have consciously integrated this experience into your life?”
  - a. Follow-up questions, if necessary, will be, If you have not integrated the experience into your life, what have been the obstacles to the integration?
  - b. Did other things in your life (unconscious processes such as in therapy, dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, or mystical events) help you to integrate this experience?
  - c. Has the experience caused any disruption in your life?
  - d. How has this integration clarified your life journey?
- 8. I will ask the participant to share his or her observations from dreams, shamanic journeys, or synchronistic experiences occurring in the period of preparation for the interview, to see if any insights into the experience are revealed by this method of knowing.
- 9. I will be attentive to the possibility for the emergence from the participants’ stories of the shadow side of wilderness rites of passage, such as disintegration and cultural rejection in a society that generally holds such work in disregard.
- 10. As the interview is winding down, I will display to the participant several depictions of the Tarot Fool card. I will ask each participant to select a card and share with me

why he or she finds it meaningful with respect to their wilderness rites of passage experience.

11. I will ask the participant if he or she was aware of sensation in his or her body during the interview or preparation for the interview, to determine if there is information in this way of knowing.
12. We will then close the interview with a few minutes of drumming to “close” sacred space.
13. I will ask the participant if he or she has any questions about the interview or how the data will be used.

## Appendix G: Some Modern Wilderness Rites of Passage Providers

Academy of Self Mastery  
PO Box 3731  
Camp Verde, AZ 86322  
[www.mastersofsedona.com](http://www.mastersofsedona.com)

Adventures with Spirit  
Liz Oettinger  
305 Lee St  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
[lizis@lycos.com](mailto:lizis@lycos.com)

All One Journey  
Lorindra Moonstar Frances  
PO Box 1544  
Middletown, CA 95461  
[lorindramoonstar@yahoo.com](mailto:lorindramoonstar@yahoo.com)

Animas Valley Institute  
Bill Plotkin  
54 Ute Pass Trail  
Durango, CO 81301  
[www.animas.org](http://www.animas.org)

Back To The Source  
Miguel and Julie Batz  
106 Marcela Dr.  
Watsonville, CA 95076  
[jmbatz@hotmail.com](mailto:jmbatz@hotmail.com)

Center For Intrinsic Leadership  
Jeanne Gunter  
74 Taormina Lane  
Ojai, CA 93023  
[www.intrinsicleadership.org](http://www.intrinsicleadership.org)

Circles  
Noam Salpeter  
PO BOX 641336  
San Francisco, CA 94164  
[www.c-i-r-c-l-e-s.com](http://www.c-i-r-c-l-e-s.com)

Condor Clan  
Barbara Rex  
718 Cedar Place  
Venura, CA 93001  
[rex@clunet.edu](mailto:rex@clunet.edu)

Condor Vision  
Kent & Farion Pearce  
670 Cedar Place  
Ventura, CA 93001  
[farion@sbcglobal.net](mailto:farion@sbcglobal.net)

Coyote Madonna  
Munro Sickafoose & Susanna Maida  
24001 NE Ellis Lane  
Newberg, Oregon 97132  
[www.coyotemadonna.com](http://www.coyotemadonna.com)

Eagle Mountain Institute  
Jim Collins  
344 Flume Street  
Chico, CA 95928  
[www.spiritquest.org](http://www.spiritquest.org)

Earth-Heart  
Malcolm Ringwalt  
P.O .Box 926  
Topanga, CA 90290  
[www.earth-heart.net](http://www.earth-heart.net)

Earth-Space  
Linda Clark  
PO Box 38  
Westcliffe, CA 81252  
[http://web.mac.com/earth\\_space](http://web.mac.com/earth_space)

Earthways  
Sara Harris  
PO Box 1104  
Sebastopol, CA 95473  
[www.earthways.info](http://www.earthways.info)

Earthen Spirituality Project  
 Jesse Wolf Hardin  
 P.O. Box 820  
 Reserve, NM 87830  
[www.earthenspirituality.org](http://www.earthenspirituality.org)

Global Heart Spirit in Nature Ministries  
 Hannah Rothlin  
 PO Box 1873  
 Quincy, CA  
[www.ghspiritinnature.org](http://www.ghspiritinnature.org)

John Davis  
 3743 Nelson Road  
 Longmont, CO 80503  
<http://www.johnvdavis.com>

Natural Pathfinder  
 Catriona MacGregor  
 67 Rocca Dr  
 Fairfax, CA 94930  
<http://www.naturalpathfinder.com/>

Northlight Family Services  
 Rob Meltzer  
 8771 Wolff Ct, Suite 215  
 Westminster, CO 80031  
[www.schoolsthatfit.com](http://www.schoolsthatfit.com)

Ojai Foundation  
 9739 Ojai-Santa Paula Rd.  
 Ojai, CA 93023  
[www.ojaifoundation.org](http://www.ojaifoundation.org)

Open Sky  
 Petra Lentz-Snow  
 628 Cambridge Ave  
 Menlo Park, CA 94025  
[petralentz@sbcglobal.net](mailto:petralentz@sbcglobal.net)

Outback of Beyond  
 Tom & Mary Quinton  
 PO Box 222044  
 Carmel, CA 93922  
[tomquinton@earthlink.net](mailto:tomquinton@earthlink.net)

Q Quest  
 Charles Fletcher & Richard Rivers  
 1332 Pearl St  
 Boulder, CO 80302  
[www.qquest.net](http://www.qquest.net)

Rites of Passage  
 Michael Bodkin  
 P.O. Box 2061  
 Santa Rosa, CA 95405  
[www.ritesofpassagevisionquest.org](http://www.ritesofpassagevisionquest.org)

Sacred Ground Wilderness rites of passage  
 Jonathan Massey  
 PO Box 6353  
 Mesa, AZ 85216  
[www.sacredgroundcenter.com](http://www.sacredgroundcenter.com)

School Of The Living Springs  
 Beth Beurkens  
 PO Box 840  
 Mt. Shasta, CA 96067  
[spiritquest@cruzers.com](mailto:spiritquest@cruzers.com)

School of Lost Borders  
 P.O. Box 796  
 Big Pine, Ca 93513  
 760-938-3333  
[www.schooloflostborders.org](http://www.schooloflostborders.org)

Serving Spirit  
 Tony Robichaud  
 52630 Sylvan Way  
 Pine Cove, CA 92549-2191  
[manyhorseslodge@hotmail.com](mailto:manyhorseslodge@hotmail.com)

Soul-O-Union  
 Keith and Annie Kilburn  
 435 Skillman Lane  
 Petaluma, CA 94952  
[www.howchi.net](http://www.howchi.net)

Still Mountain Wilderness Center  
 Cristin Culbreath  
 PO Box 3757  
 Carmel, CA 93921  
[www.stillmountainwilderness.com](http://www.stillmountainwilderness.com)

Tree Of Life Wilderness rites of passage  
 Phil Baum  
 30638 Rolling Hills Drive  
 Valley Center, CA 92082  
[lovetree@nethere.com](mailto:lovetree@nethere.com)

VisionQuest  
 600 N. Swan Road  
 P.O. Box 12906  
 Tucson AZ 85732  
[www.vq.com](http://www.vq.com)

Wilderness Rites, LLC  
 Skye Bailey  
 PO Box 3004  
 San Anselmo, CA 94979  
[skye@littlearrows.info](mailto:skye@littlearrows.info)

Wilderness Transitions  
 Marilyn Foster Riley  
 70 Rodeo Ave.  
 Sausalito, CA 94965

Wilderness Reflections  
 Dave Talamo  
 PO BOX 177  
 Woodacre, CA 94973  
[www.wildernessreflections.com](http://www.wildernessreflections.com)

Wing Rock Journeys  
 Jay Fields  
 Portland, OR  
<http://wingrockjourneys.com>

Women's Wilderness Quests  
 Linda Weber  
 525 Jack Pine Ct  
 Boulder, CO 80304  
[www.womenswildernessquests.org](http://www.womenswildernessquests.org)

## Appendix H: Integral Research Skills

Skill	Re-searcher or Participant	1st Stage Preparing for Research and Collecting Data	2nd Stage Working with Data	3rd Stage Communicating Findings
<i>Doing Dream Work</i>	Re-searcher	Record my own dreams while preparing proposal and interviewing participants (already in process).	Reflect upon my recorded dreams and the dreams of the participants in sacred space (see below) with attention to the symbolic or archetypal metaphors, be open to meanings surfacing, and write (using the writing techniques below) any meanings that do surface.	Have intentions to have dreams about communicating to the audience of the study's findings and will pay particular attention to dreams that may have symbolic or archetypal meaning regarding such communication.
	Coresearcher		Treat my own rites of passage experience as a dream-like experience for purposes of dream work analysis	Include in my writing about my own experience the point of view of treating it like dream.
<i>Doing Dream Work (cont.)</i>	Participant	Ask participants about memorable dreams during or relating to wilderness rites of passage experience.		

		Ask participants to join in working with their dreams; treat their rites of passage experience as a waking dream and do dream work with it.	
<i>Shamanic Journeying</i>	Re-searcher	Journey according to the shamanic traditions of my training and ask the archetypal guides to instruct me regarding transformative messages received during wilderness rites of passage. Upon “return” from the journey record the experience.	Journey to gain understanding about the manner in which I can best communicate the findings of the study to the intended audience. Ask my archetypal guide to show me my audience and then ask them how I can best communicate to them.
<i>Shamanic Journeying (cont.)</i>	Coresearcher	Journey to discover meanings in my own rites of passage experience.	Analyze my recorded journeys in sacred space with an intention of understanding and paying particular attention to the symbolic or archetypal messages from the journey.

	Participant	Suggest that participants who are comfortable journeying on their own to do so regarding their rites of passage experience and bring a record of such journey to the interview.		
<i>Working in Sacred Space</i>	Re-searcher	Ceremonially open sacred space following my shamanic training of calling in the six directions wherever I am working on this proposal, researching literature, or collecting data.	Open sacred space prior to each session of working with the data.	Write up the study in an area (hopefully in Nature, see above) that I consecrate as sacred space before each session of writing.
	Coresearcher	Open sacred space when reflecting on or writing about my own rites of passage experience.	Open sacred space prior to each session of working with my own data.	
<i>Working in Sacred Space (cont.)</i>	Participant	With the participants consent, wordlessly open sacred space (or allow the participant to do so) prior to conducting the interview.		

<i>Embodied Writing</i>	Re-searcher	Write proposal from the heart with feeling and “bring the finely textured experiences of the human body to the art of writing.”	Be alert to my body’s sensations as I analyze and contemplate the data.	Write the presentation of the studies findings from the heart catching and conveying the feelings of both the participants and the researcher.
	Coresearcher	Be aware of and convey in my writing the bodily sensations I experience as I reflect upon and write about my own rites of passage experience.		
	Participant	Ask participant to be aware of and relate to me the bodily sensations they experience as I interview them.		
<i>Nature Writing</i>	Re-searcher	Write proposal using Tredinnick’s approach that a writer is a witness, of a world larger than the merely human.	Be alert to and take notice of the other than human elements of the data.	Prepare the studies report using Tredinnick’s approach that a writer is a witness of a world (and, in this case, of data) larger than the merely human.

		Write about my own rites of passage experience taking into account other- than-human elements.		
		Participant		
<i>Being Alert to Synchronistic Events</i>	Re-searcher	Notice and record any synchronistic events observed while preparing proposal and working with participants	Notice and record synchronistic occurrences while working with the data.	Convey to the reader the sense of synchronicity observed.
	Coresearcher	Attempt to recall and look for in my contemporary writings synchronistic events occurring during my wilderness rites of passage.		
<i>Being Alert to Synchronistic Events (cont.)</i>	Participant	Ask participant to attempt to remember or discover in their records synchronistic events associated with their quests or with their participation in this study.		
<i>Artistically Engaging Archetypal Images</i>				
	Re-searcher	Work and dialogue with Coyote/Fool image. Be aware of other images that may appear relating to Coyote/Fool	Continue dialogue with Coyote about data as long as it wants. Interact with participant's selection of archetypal image.	Continue dialogue with Coyote regarding writing up research results as long as it wants to continue dialogue.

<i>Artistically Engaging Archetypal Images (cont.)</i>	Coresearcher	<hr/> Ask Coyote about my own wilderness rites of passage experience. Be alert for other artistic/archetypal images that may provide meaning about the experience. <hr/>
	Participant	<hr/> Ask participants to find and bring to the interview, an image, song, piece of poetry, part of Nature, or something else that expresses their experiences on the wilderness rites of passage quest and that may serve as a way to introduce themselves to me. Also, during interview, to select a meaningful image from among several Tarot depictions of the Fool. <hr/>

### Appendix I: Cycle 1 Dialogue With Coyote

I am hiking up Garnet Canyon to the base of Middle Teton Mountain. It is a challenging hike, particularly the boulder fields just before reaching the black basaltic stripe that marks this peak with such its dramatic and distinguishing slash. Far below me to the southeast two glacial lakes, Bradley and Taggart Lakes, reflect the perfection of cloudless sky. To the northeast, the edge of Jenny Lake reminds me of its position as queen of the Teton glacial lakes. The hurrying of Garnet Creek, fed completely by the snow still melting in late July in the basin formed by the Middle Teton, Nez Perce, and Cloudveil Dome, dominated the sounds on the airwaves; although the calls of the red tailed hawks circling above recommend a more peaceful pace. My wife, who understands my moods better than I do, walks ahead. She lets me know she is with me by leaving me alone. A feeling of belonging to this spot surges through my body. The belonging seems grander, somehow, than my assertion that these peaks are my “birth mountains,” a claim I make because they are visible from Idaho Falls, the place of my first appearance in this lifetime. To say I love the Teton Mountains as a place seems inadequate to describe my homage. For most of my adult life I have driven the 5 hours north from my home in Salt Lake City to visit my birth mountains at least once a year. I always feel nurtured in the bosoms of the Teton Range.

A numinous shiver creeps up my back me as I realized this was the exact spot I saw in my dream when I met Coyote, before I knew what he was. [What he is, of course, is my “text” for Cycle 1 of the Intuitive Inquiry method of my dissertation research. The dream is described in the chapter 3 of my dissertation.] I realize that in my dream Coyote and I would have been looking east from this very spot, so it was the sunrise we were witnessing [in the dream I could not discern if it were the raising or setting sun we witnessed]. East, sunrise, springtime symbolize new beginnings and I felt as if Coyote had given me a new beginning. I may have had some

unconscious part of me that thought I was a Fool; nevertheless, I felt that Coyote gave me that knowledge.

My years of shamanic training and practice have made me adept at accessing alternate states of consciousness. I regularly enter the underworld and converse with entities I encounter on the edge of an underground pool fed by an underground river waterfall. I believe that such entities are aspects of my unconscious and I pay close attention to their messages because they may contain messages from my soul, my daimon, or the collective unconscious intended for my consciousness. Such “journeys” to the underworld require some preparation and intention on my part. For example, I will often drum or rattle and follow a specific path that leads me always to an underground pool, a now familiar place. This place has a very specific feeling about it, a feeling I would recognize anywhere, anytime. The feeling is tinged with a taste of fear: excitement and dread blended into a brew that bubbles in my gut but it also possesses a numinous quality, like a sacred encounter and an awesome aspect, like engaging a mythical monster. When I looked into the eyes of the Fool, the Coyote, to begin my Cycle 1 dialogue with it, this underworld feeling suddenly engulfed me. In the representation on the card the Coyote is standing in water; I see him on the edge of my underground pool. When he spoke to me, I was not surprised; in fact, I expected it. Everything, even the rocks and plants and the water itself, speaks in the underworld. “You know nothing, Fool, but you have much to teach,” Coyote said.

Back on the mountain I awake from my revelry and quicken my pace to catch up to my wife. I remember that two days ago a few miles north of Evanston, Wyoming, on a nearly deserted road, a coyote stepped on to the road and drew my eyes to his (he was quite large for his species and I suspected he was a male, which was verified when he retreated). There were no cars in sight on the road, so I slowed my truck to a crawl and fixed his intense gaze with my

own. Our eyes were locked for several long seconds. I had the very distinct impression that the coyote had been synchronistically drawn to meet me at this point before I immersed myself into the rejuvenation of the wilderness surrounding the Teton Mountains. The coyote stared directly into my soul with searing intensity. It seemed to me he exerted great effort to communicate something to me. I focused my intention and my attention solely on him. The thought he communicated to me was, “if you are going to learn from me you must be quiet and listen to me.”

Coyote taught me, when I listened to him, two lessons about the topic of my dissertation. The first lesson was this: interspecies communication sometimes involves more than psychological projection. I experienced my own wilderness rites of passage quest as a mystical experience. My studies helped me understand that my own personal unconscious and my tapping into material of the collective unconscious created much of what I experienced. My first draft of the proposal for this dissertation concluded that *all* that was encountered on my wilderness rites of passage quest was the product of my internal, mostly unconscious, processes. Coyote taught me, by physically appearing and communicating with me, that *he*, an external other, a non-human being, had something to teach me if I were willing to listen. I modified the proposal for this dissertation to allow for the possibility that mystical experiences, not just psychological encounters, are part of a wilderness rites of passage quest. Animals may really speak. A tree really shared with me its wisdom of resilience. It was more than an innate part of me that surfaced when I looked at the tough tree growing out of rock, bent hard against the weather.

We are scrambling over the boulders now. Just a few hundred yards from the base of the Middle Teton and the trail that leads to the “saddle,” the base camp for assaults on the heights of the Grand Teton. Our goal is much more modest: the base of the Middle Teton. It is a good

round trip day hike. It seems I am listening more to the hurried stream than to the laconic hawks. I almost slide off the edge of boulder to a drop of about a hundred feet. “Pay attention, fool” I curse to myself. Nothing teaches being present like a boulder field.

The second lesson that Coyote taught me involved transmitting to me a better understanding of archetypes. While I had envisioned myself as a Hero beginning an intuitive dissertation journey, Coyote reminded me that I was a Fool. At first I received the appellation as an insult. Nevertheless, as I learned the lesson about mysticism, I realized that this study would benefit from my making a fresh start with a beginner’s mind. The humbling title was just what my Intuitive Inquiry required.

By living the Fool archetype, I learned much more about archetypes in general. I understand first hand what is meant by “pre-existent patterns of human experience.” I discovered that, in growing up as a very serious little boy, adolescent, and young adult, I suppressed and despised foolishness. I can now see that, when my soul said, “Set your people free,” it was suggesting that my people and I could benefit if I embraced the Fool part of me. I also realized that the Fool represents the beginning and the end of a journey. I embraced the fact that, in this humble and foolish state, all of my wiles must be engaged as I begin this challenging journey of discovering the experience of transformational encounters received during a modern wilderness rites of passage quest, through dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, and mysticism.

Having reached our hiking destination we touch the jet black basalt stripe of the Middle Teton. The silvery white granite on either side of the 20 foot wide core makes it all the more surprising. We have our reward: we are surprised, just as we expected. We begin the return. I am

grateful for Coyote's insights. He surprised me, he taught me, but somewhere deep in the core of me, I already knew or at least expected.

Later I dreamed: I am crawling on large flat rock high in the mountains and it is so dark I am on my stomach feeling and inching my way along. I come to a point where I feel the edge of cliff. I peer down into the darkness and cannot see anything but I hear water far below. I turn to back away from the edge, but the edge is now also on my right, my left, behind me. The surface of the rock is shrinking and the edge is moving in on all sides. Coyote watches me. I look into his eyes. His eyes say, "You can't avoid it much longer. You are going over the edge." I remember again the Tarot Fool stepping off the edge. I'm in my dream now. I stand up on the shrinking rock, I look Coyote in the eye, and I step over the edge. My reflections on this dream lead me to believe a process of growth and change awaited me personally, and, I sincerely hoped and believed, the world of transpersonal psychology, as I stepped off into the open space of this study.

Interestingly, during the 4-month process of interviewing the participants during the summer of 2009 I never saw Coyote in his physical form. His nonappearance during the entire summer struck me as very strange. I usually see many coyotes each summer since I spend as much time as I can in the backcountry of Utah and Wyoming. I've even seen coyotes near my home in the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains. But for the entire summer of 2009, maybe in part because I expected to encounter Coyote, I did not see one physical manifestation of him. Then on August 24, 2009 while driving south on Interstate 215 along the east bench of the Salt Lake Valley to my last interview, just as the road curves toward the west near the 6200 South exit I saw a coyote that had recently been hit and killed by a car on the side of the highway.

I did not expect the sudden impact of a wall of emotion that I slammed into. My eyes filled with tears and my mind immediately started searching for meaning. Why would Coyote appear in a dead form just as I am about to conclude the research-gathering portion of this study? Of course, my inner critic started in, “It’s surely a sign that your study is DOA—give up!” I admit I feel as if Coyote has deserted me. When I conducted my wilderness quest with the data I had gathered I went to a place that several years ago I named Coyote Canyon because of its frequent and noisy visitors. For three days while there I only heard one yip in the night—no howling choirs, no lone mournful wail, no sightings—just one quick, short yip. I miss Coyote. I guess I am on my own.

## Appendix J: Preliminary Lenses

Preliminary Lenses	Origin		Application
	Theory	Experience	
1. My cultural background.	Environmental and natural influence on human development.	I witness my own views being derived from my limited cultural experience.	I must be acutely aware of the cultural values ingrained into my thinking and consciously open my mind to accept values outside my own culture.
2. Humans are connected with Nature	Ecopsychology theory, ancient mystical wisdom.	On a recent hike in the Teton Mountains a euphoric feeling overwhelmed me when I perceived I was anchored in my “place” on and in the world.	Recognizing their connection with Nature can be soulfully healing to humans and to the planet.
3. Humans have become separated from Nature.	Ecopsychology theory.	During a three-day fast alone in the wilderness I noticed my ego quiet and I felt more connected with Nature.	Humans must reconnect with Nature.
4. Humans are fearful of Nature	Ecopsychology theory.	During a three-day fast alone in the wilderness I noticed my fear of Nature.	Humans must quiet egoic fear to reconnect with Nature.
5. Humans benefit from reestablishing a connection with Nature.	Ecopsychology theory, ancient mystical wisdom.	When I discovered I was anchored to my place in the world I felt a sense of belonging and purpose.	Spending time in Nature can be soulfully healing to the human and to the planet.
6. Encounters in dreams, active imagination, altered states of consciousness, or mystical experiences promote self-awareness.	Jung’s writings, Jungian psychology, exceptional human experience theory.	I dreamed of a coyote that mystically appeared to me in the flesh. I actively imagined conversing with him, and, in an altered state of consciousness at about 10,000 feet in the Teton Mountains, his message to me became clear.	Remembering, writing down, and working with dreams; engaging in active imagination exercises; seeking altered states of consciousness; and noting mystical experience provide opportunities to encounter material of the collective unconscious.

7. Human reflection onto Nature increases self-awareness	Ecopsychology theory, Jungian and deep psychology theory, and gestalt therapy.	I engaged in a three-day conversation with Great Tree, a weather-battered piñon, that taught me about resilience. I believe, that, although the tree added its own wisdom, I projected my own unconscious resilience onto the tree and witnessed it mirrored back to me.	By listening to plants, animals, and inanimate objects in Nature, humans can understand their own unconscious thoughts and feelings; integration of uncovered individual or collective unconscious thoughts contributes positively to humans' well-being.
8. Other-than-human beings inform human awareness.	Ancient mystical wisdom, some modern Nature writers, and exceptional human experience theory.	A coyote appeared on the roadside the day after I had dreamed of a coyote. The thoughts I received from looking into his eyes taught me that I could learn from a coyote.	Humans, by listening to plants, animals, and inanimate objects, can gain understandings that originate beyond their own consciousness or unconsciousness.
9. Mystical sources also inform human awareness.	Ancient mystical wisdom, some modern Nature writers, and exceptional human experience theory.	Great Tree communicates with me.	Humans, by listening to plants, animals, and inanimate objects, can gain understandings that originate beyond their own consciousness or unconsciousness.
10. Integration increases transformation	Jungian theory	As I try to set myself and my people free I transform by recognizing the prisons in which I ensconce myself.	Humans may develop by integrating newly discovered aspects of themselves into consciousness.

11. Meaningful rituals, rites of passage, and ceremonies create states of mind that are more open to encounters with the material of the collective unconscious.	Neuropsychology, ancient mystical wisdom, and modern ritual theory.	During the shamanic ritual of journeying, I encountered and dialogued with Wild Man, a symbolic archetype of my unconscious and the collective unconscious.	Humans can create and engage in meaningful rituals and ceremonies that will produce the numinous feelings of connectedness associated with encounters with collective unconscious material.
12. A wilderness rites of passage quest represents a mythical hero's journey and, as such, is a meaningful rite of passage with potential for transformation.	Modern wilderness rites of passage theory, ancient tribal custom, wisdom, and mythology.	On a modern day wilderness rites of passage quest, I received a message from my soul to set my people free. This archetypal encounter suffused my life and led me to propose this study.	A wilderness rites of passage quest provides an opportunity for modern humans to participate in a meaningful rite of passage.

## Appendix K: Interview With Climber

1 Climber

2 Transcript of Interview Held on May 26, 2009

3 At Home of Robert Wood

4 **RW:** I thought we would start by talking about the object you have brought to...ah...as a way  
5 of introduction. In this case there is no ice to break, whatever ice there was was broken long  
6 ago. It will be used as an icebreaker in other interviews and will hopefully give me...give us  
7 some insight as to what is going on for you.

8 I'll let you explain what it is that you have brought.

9 **Climber:** O.K. I brought two things. One thing I fashioned about a year ago. It was on the  
10 year anniversary of my solo vision quest. I went down to Escalante on March of 2008. And  
11 took myself for 3 days and found that place I told you about.

12 **RW:** Yes, the 3 sisters.

13 **Climber:** Yes. And I was there for about 3 days, two nights. And I had just enough to eat and  
14 just enough water. But I did sort of my own version of it. I think in some ways it was a  
15 culmination of that year. I made this thing out of just every stuff that I had found at the site,  
16 including feathers that were stuck in the trees. So maybe some of the feathers are yours. And  
17 a vertebrae bone, a backbone, and another little bone and these two little ... I don't know  
18 what they are. But I carved that word into this stick: "Integrity" and for me this integrity  
19 meant coming into focus with what was inside and what was outside: you know sort of a ... a  
20 kind of wholeness, so that, so that I wasn't this split. So this was that. So I was looking  
21 through this journal that I have kept since, I don't know, several years. It includes my vision  
22 quest and all of the things that I have done: classes and things that have been on this path.

23 And I found that there had been a couple of times that I had sort of made a drawing that sort  
24 of had these elements in it. And so that, I just quickly drew that drawing again for you to be a  
25 picture of kind of what my experience of my vision quest was. Um, so those are the things I  
26 brought.

27 **RW:** I remember you describing this to me but I had never seen it. So this is mine to keep?

28 **Climber:** Yeah. You can't keep that (indicating the stick with Integrity carved into it), but  
29 you can keep that (indicating the picture).

30 **RW:** Yeah, I know. Thanks. I understand.

31 **Climber:** If it is useful to you.

32 **RW:** No, that's great. So tell me a little about what it all is.

33 **Climber:** About what it all is? So there's was a point on the second day of my vision quest  
34 when I stood up on a high point and had a number of realization that in order for me to do  
35 what would, what I think, what I'd like to live into, let's just say that, it requires a deeply  
36 rooted roots growing from my feet as I stand on the Earth and I stand without clothing or  
37 pretense. I'm a clear vessel of light that shines out through my hands. And dealing with both  
38 the dark and the light. Which has been embodied in two people in my life. You know, very  
39 strong forces in my life. Light, and the world can't be all light because it doesn't work when  
40 it's all light; and of dark and thundery clouds and it doesn't work when it's all dark either. So  
41 having both of those, you know, standing with both of those elements there and staying  
42 standing is part of, you know, staying upright myself without being pulled by either one.

43 **RW:** Yeah, wow. Well, thanks you.

44 **Climber:** I don't have my name on it; I forgot that.

45 **RW:** I will remember. Well, before I sent you a list of the questions we are going to go  
46 through so the way I'd like to conduct that part of me asking the questions is with the talking  
47 staff. You even know this very staff. And I think everyone I interview will have a least some  
48 familiarity with a talking staff. Just as a reminder to both me and you: whoever holds this  
49 speaks from the heart. So...um...I'll ask you the questions while holding this because they are  
50 from my heart and not just from my head; I hope, I don't know, maybe I'll learn something  
51 about this as we go along. Then I'll set the talking staff down. When you are ready then you  
52 can take it and answer the questions. So there is no rush, I don't want to take too much of  
53 your time but if there are long moments of silence, let's be good with that, okay?

54 **Climber:** Uh huh.

55 **RW:** So that this is really something coming from the heart. So... I keep referring to my  
56 protocol here so I am sure I am doing what I told them I would do.  
57 Okay, the first question is: Tell me in your own words, tell me if you would, if you feel  
58 comfortable: the experience that you had on your vision quest, what it was like in that  
59 experience that you had. Let's just start with that. The experience we are trying to focus on is  
60 the experience that has caused you to make some change in your life. What I am most  
61 interested in is what was that experience like, not just what happened but how it felt and what  
62 it was like. Does that make sense?

63 **Climber:** Uh-huh.

64 **Climber:** So I think the...the point in the three day solo fast where I made probably the  
65 biggest shift was on the second day, um, after a first day of feeling so tired that I could barely  
66 move, I just wanted to sleep the whole day as if someone's large foot were pressed down on  
67 me. The second day I had a lot of energy. And, um, my solo sight was at the back this huge,

68 huge bolder on the slope of a hill. At the top of the hill were red rock cliffs. So I went with  
69 water, with the minimum I needed to know I would be okay. I walked up the hill, picked my  
70 way to a cliff band, keeping in mind I had to be safe for myself and other people, but feeling  
71 a drive to go up. When I got to base of the red rock cliff band, a place I am very familiar with  
72 from being, climbing may time always standing at the bottom of these cliffs. There was a  
73 little in-cut place too and I sat there and I was mourning. I had been mourning for two or  
74 three years and continued to mourn the loss of a marriage. And some weather came in, and I  
75 don't remember at exactly what point it came in, I think, but I think just before it came in I—  
76 I was standing up there and I could see everything, I had a lay-of-the-land and I could  
77 imagine and could sort of point out some of my other solo questers' places, where they were,  
78 I could see tents, at least one tent across the way. And I took off all my cloths. I had brought  
79 a, like a tie-die Indian cotton wrap thing that I'd had for quite a while. I just wrapped that  
80 around me and I had a—a stick, I can't remember where that—I think I had just picked that  
81 up. And I stood in front of the boulders that were in front of the cliff band and I stood up, as  
82 if to make myself completely visible. [Visible emotion, tears]. And, yeah, completely visible.  
83 I threw away the staff, I threw it down the hill, knowing that I didn't need anything. I didn't  
84 need anything to hold on to and I felt my own power. [Crying]. And I think it was at that  
85 point that a rainstorm came in—almost as if I had conjured it up, actually now that I think  
86 about it. And—so then I was, you know, the shelter was there, everything was there that I  
87 needed. You know the cliff band had an undercut cut and I could walk two feet back and I  
88 just sat and I watched the rain and it rained and rained. And for some reason I knew that it  
89 would clear up and it cleared up and I walked back down. And everything I mean I often find  
90 that things, I have a sense that things are going to work out if I spend the time. If I am there

91 present things work out. But I think that moment of standing up with arms outstretched and  
92 being visible was that point in the vision quest where I learned something.

93 **RW:** Wow, did it look anything like this? I have a tremendous vision of that.

94 **Climber:** Wind blowing.

95 **RW:** So you just now got emotional as you talked about that and I want to probe that a little  
96 bit. Following intuitively going off the list here a little bit. Can you tell me some more about  
97 that, how it felt, even how it feels right here, right now? Was it in your body? And what  
98 about that memory brings that feeling?

99 **Climber:** Well, I knew that doing this interview would be extremely fun and beneficial to me  
100 because I would learn things that I didn't get before. Because it seems like it's a never-  
101 ending pool of mystery that I can swim in. So just remembering that feeling of standing up  
102 and being visible, when I said the words visible it reinforced to me how invisible I have felt.  
103 And there's I mean there's a great, ah, I'm amazed at, um, the courage that it takes to stand  
104 up and be visible when you feel that you are not. I mean it ah so um I mean that I can just see  
105 that it has repercussions on many levels of my life and just how I am on the planet. And that  
106 the way I felt when I stood up like that in the wind and rain with the bare—you know,  
107 nothing but just me and the Earth it felt like that is the full, real [Climber], both familiar and  
108 strange at the same time. You know that it my body, you know, I remember it and I've  
109 contacted that feeling since then on and off. Um, and I'm, I think I am trying to feel that as  
110 much as possible because it helps in my relationships. It just helps so much when I can be in  
111 that place. And uh I feel it now more than I did two years ago. I mean as I am sitting here  
112 right now, I can feel what that feels like. I don't know how to put it into words really. But I  
113 think a person's, their own power, I mean it's a framing in a sense, in a sense, you know, I

114 mean you're not even you anymore. There's a connection you feel both you and you feel  
115 much larger than you at the same time. So it's ah it's for me a feeling of you know of being  
116 beyond paradox in some way. Um. Feeling like I'm both one and I'm many. I'm both  
117 individual and connected collective. You know? Maybe that's as close as I can get right now  
118 as to what that feeling is.

119 **RW:** Do you think that having this feeling and reflecting back on it has changed your life?

120 And what, what I am focused on is feeling more than thought. What does it feel like to have  
121 your life changed, to have different way of approaching life.

122 **Climber:** It definitely has changed my life. It has given me somewhat more of a map or of a  
123 course or something to follow. Because I had come to a point where the script for my life had  
124 run out. Had not done what I had anticipated for it to do. Because before, up until that point,  
125 the script had worked really well for me. And so, this was post-script. And, um so, so the  
126 way that it has changed my life is it has become something I realize I have to return to and  
127 keep returning to and turning to and turning to again and again until I no longer have to turn  
128 and it is always there because I want to make a difference I want to help this species survive.  
129 You know and I feel like that unless I contact that power and stay in it and ride it I won't be  
130 able to really help the way I am deeply, deeply driven to. So okay so the second part of your  
131 question was the feeling of ... what was it?

132 **RW:** How does it feel when you are in that power?

133 **Climber:** How does it feel when you are in that power—yeah. Um well there's a lot more  
134 clarity, compassion, I don't feel the need to judge or be critical which is my favorite thing to  
135 do. Um, I have the power to truly help others, which is not an idea but an experience, I can  
136 see that when I'm in that power. I'm not trying to force myself on other people. That I can

137 just naturally give more what they need, which is still kind of rare but I am practicing. So to  
138 be, so to be in that power is to both clearly aware of my unique gifts and individuality and at  
139 the same time feeling very connected to everyone else as well as, you know, the whole of  
140 creation. The way that it all works. Connected. I feel connected.

141 **RW:** Thank you. I just want to listen. Ah this is a good question. What was going on in your  
142 life at the time you decided to go on a vision quest and that you had this experience? What is  
143 the context of the whole circumstances?

144 **Climber:** Yeah, great. Um, well as I said my script had run out. I was attending—I was  
145 doing a master degree program at Naropa as part of the transpersonal psychology,  
146 ecopsychology masters degree. So this vision quest was a part of that program. But I had  
147 started that program because I had done, I had jumped out of my marriage with a man that I  
148 had dearly loved and still love, um, and I was in a huge amount of grief because of the  
149 divorce or because of the loss. And probably on top of that the loss of a whole lot of things:  
150 the loss of innocence, I mean I see that it was a very quintessential midlife transition period  
151 time. Where, um, and without a lot of culture maps about what to do, how to grow up. I  
152 didn't want to grow up the way my culture tells me to grow up. I've always rebelled against  
153 that. It just doesn't feel right. So what do I do now, you know, no real course and so really  
154 feeling—you know, having lost the thing that was most dear to me which was embodied in  
155 this man whose a wild innocent playful south-shield person I wanted that for myself, I  
156 wanted that. One of the things when I stood up, when I stood up on the cliff band, I feel I  
157 saw, I mean I'm projecting all these things onto my former husband you know that really are  
158 in me. I was so attracted to him because those things that he has that I love so much are a part  
159 of me, like my golden shadow, that I'm not owning. I'm afraid to own because they are too

160 powerful. And I'm still don't quite have the wiring for that electricity to run through me. So  
161 yeah grief...just a lot of grief and having jumped into a relationship with a man who was my  
162 best friend who is the clouds there...dark and deep and brooding, and soulful. Sort of my  
163 karmic quintessential thing was being in love with two men: one pure light but didn't want to  
164 go very deep and one pure darkness that sometimes is just, you know, hard for me to deal  
165 with. That was my perceived context at that time: love affairs, love.

166 **RW:** In preparation for this interview I had mentioned that you may want to think about  
167 dreams, be cognizant of your dreams or be aware of any synchronicities. Did you notice  
168 anything along those lines? No is an okay answer but I was just trying to probe for that as  
169 well.

170 **Climber:** Um I have not notice anything in particular. But I will say that since my vision  
171 quest things are constantly happening. That's what this whole book is about [indicating the  
172 journal she had brought with her]. Dreams have not, I'm not a ... I'd like to learn more about  
173 how the dreaming thing works. I have recorded dreams but I haven't really worked with  
174 them. So I haven't really had any outstanding dreams that come to mind since I got that  
175 information. So the short answer is no.

176 **RW:** I had a dream that I wanted to tell you about, about this, if it's okay. Because I am  
177 trying to be cognizant of any dreams that I have before each interview. This is a very short  
178 dream. But, one of my animal guides is a coyote...there's a picture of one hanging up over  
179 there...that particular one I like a lot, but in this dream, last night, specifically I went to be  
180 and said okay I'm going to talk with Climber tomorrow and I specifically set an intention to  
181 have a dream. But the dream was: I knew... I was looking into a little cave and it was dark  
182 and I knew that the coyote was in there and I knew he could see me but I couldn't see him.

183 And I just tried real hard to see if there would be some light and I could catch a glimpse of  
184 his eye or of something. I knew he was there, but I couldn't see him. I don't know what that  
185 mean...if nothing else at least it's on the tape. One of my insights is that we are really going  
186 to get into something deep here...and I think we have. Is there anything you want to add? We  
187 have answered the questions I was look at, but is there anything you want to add to this?

188 **Climber:** Um, I thought it was significant. The animal encounters that I had that I just  
189 wanted to put out there. One was before I went on the solo fast and it was just as a group in  
190 the 2 or 3 days before and I went across in the gully and just sat by myself and along...in  
191 back of me not too far away on a trail a mother and a baby, black bear cub come walking and  
192 I was wearing a big white shirt. I was just as obvious as I could be. And they walked behind  
193 me and past me, as if I weren't there. But they were close...they were probably 15 to 20 feet  
194 away. Small, small mother and baby, you know, and I felt they went down and across a little  
195 rise. And I believe the mother turned around and looked back. But they seemed completely  
196 unperturbed. Then on my solo for three days, I had psychedelic lizards visiting me it was...I  
197 had never seen lizards like that before or since. And on the second day for pretty much, you  
198 know, a number of hours in the morning before I went up to the cliff and this you know  
199 bright yellow and blue and green, there were two of them, and one of them that looked like  
200 the female, the smaller one, just hung out on a rock, you know, just with its head looking at  
201 me cause I did some other things on the rock, you know like... And I saw those lizards every  
202 single day. It was interesting what I read afterwards in the Ted Andrews book about animals.  
203 And then, remember when we went to your land and did that training with Tom, two  
204 feathers? On the 24 hour solo, I saw a little brown lizard that had lost its tail. Because one of  
205 the things about the lizards that it said in the Ted Andrew book, well one was, the first thing

206 was about heightened sensitivity or intuition, that you are or will be experiencing you know  
207 psychic powers or I don't know. If my dreams are any indication that's not really happening.  
208 That a lizard, teaches how to let go because it loses its tail. So a year later when I was on  
209 your land and saw that lizard without a tail I wrote in this journal time to grow me a new tale:  
210 T A L E.

211 So that's more of a coming from my head than my gut, but it just, I mean I found that to be a  
212 fascinating experience in terms of my solo fast and seeing these crazy colored, bright colored  
213 lizards that I've never seen before ever. It was surreal.

214 **RW:** Thank you very much for sharing that. I've brought some pictures of Tarot cards...fools  
215 from the decks of Tarot cards...not fools in our sense of fools but fools in the sense of  
216 journeyers. I'm going to lay them out and ask you to pick one...don't think about it just pick  
217 the one you are drawn to.

218 **Climber:** I pick this one. [The androgynous person labeled, "Potential"].

219 **RW:** Can you tell me why?

220 **Climber:** Well, um, because I see myself as this androgynous person, naked who is part of  
221 this tree with its roots deep in the Earth. And I like her, its, attitude...she seems very  
222 confident.

223 **RW:** Like she is visible.

224 **Climber:** Exactly. [Tears]